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SERMONS,

ON

PRACTICAL SUBJECTS.

BY THE LATE

REV. SAMUEL CARR, D.D.

PREBENDARY OF ST. PAUL'S;
RECTOR OF ST. ANDREW UNDERSHAFT, LONDON;
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SERMON LXVI.

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Freely ye have received, freely give.

I NEED not inform this learned audience, that these words, in their original application, relate to the dispensation of those miraculous gifts, which our Saviour bestowed upon his twelve Disciples, "when he first sent them forth to preach "the word to the lost sheep of the house "of Israel." They may, however, without impropriety, now, when the power of working miracles no longer exists, be taken in a more enlarged sense, as an exhortation to every man to cultivate and

apply to the best advantage those several faculties and abilities, which he has received from the bounty of Divine Providence. And in this view, whether we consider them as applicable to the business of the present life, or the concerns of the next, they contain a lesson of the utmost use and importance, and seem to speak to every man in some such language as this:

"Freely thou hast received, at the "hand of God, a variety of blessings and "talents, to which thou hadst no claim "from any merit of thy own, but which "were the spontaneous gift of his divine "benevolence. Let this consideration, "therefore, stimulate thee to 'give, as "freely as thou hast received.' Suffer "not life to glide away insensibly in tor-"pidity or indifference; but, whatever be "thy province or station in it, call forth "all thy powers to their proper use. "Lay hold on every occasion, which pre-

"sents

"sents itself, of doing good to thyself "or others, whether in the employments "of the body or the mind, and improve "it to the best advantage. Nor vainly "imagine, that any rank or situation can "exempt thee from discharging the com-"mon duties of humanity. All have "freely received their powers of some "kind or other, and therefore all must "contribute their share towards the "movement of the great machine of the "universe."

The employments indeed of life, from "the nature and necessities of human society, will always be as various as the changes and chances of it. Some men are doomed to exert the faculties they have received in scenes less pleasing and elevated, in sustaining the labours of the body and the hardships of animal suffering: others are destined to the cultivation of the mind and its several powers, in speculative industry. To some are

delegated the reins of power: to others are entrusted the stores of affluence. Yet, amidst this variety of allotment, all have many duties, which they owe to themselves and others, and all have faculties specially appropriated to those duties, and therefore are required to be prompt, diligent, and contented in their several stations, and in fulfilling the task assigned to them in the necessary and complex arrangements of human society.

Is any man, for example, called to servile occupations, to toil at the oar, or labour in the fields? It is clearly his duty to exert that bodily strength and activity, which he has received from the hand that made him and fashioned him, with perseverance and alacrity, for the support of himself and his dependents, and the benefit of the community. And though his station may be less elevated or pleasing than that of others, yet let him not repine. It is the appointment of a wise God,

God, who ordereth all things "in num-"ber, weight, and measure," and who never layeth a burden upon any of his creatures, without something to support or alleviate the pressure of it. For let him remember, that though others have advantages which he wants, yet he is also free from many inconveniences to which they are subject. He is exempt from the dangerous snares of ambition, which lead thousands to ruin; he has no tedious hours of listless vacancy, which embitter the days of unemployed affluence, to sour his temper; the bread he eats, earned with the sweat of his brow, brings with it no diseases to embitter his own days, and entail a succession of misery upon his posterity. In short he may satisfy his amplest wishes, and console his severest fatigues, by enjoying the comfort of a good conscience here, and the prospect of eternal happiness hereafter. It will, therefore, become him to discharge the duties of his humble station with alacrity, mo-

desty, and contentment, in return for those various blessings, which he has "freely received" from his Maker.

Is any man, again, by his rank in society, free from the necessity of bodily labour? Still he must not think himself thereby privileged to do nothing, or, what is worse, to do evil. The very insect, which flutters in the sunshine of summer for a few moments, has its several faculties and ends appointed by infinite wisdom. Surely therefore a rational and immortal nature cannot be left without its proper destination. The employment indeed of such a man is different from that of the necessitous, but his duty is equal: for the more leisure he has from bodily toil, though Providence has wisely made some degree of it necessary for every man, the more he is bound to improve those noble faculties of the soul, which he has gratuitously received, in knowledge, wisdom, and virtue.

Nor

Nor let him think, that his destined task is either of small importance, or to be fulfilled without thought and exertion. Knowledge is of great value, and therefore is not to be attained without a labour proportionable to its value. It does not, as too many, in this age of shallow learning and superficial enquiry, seem to think, lie upon the surface, the prize of every fortuitous passenger. If we mean to find it, we must dig for it, as for hidden treasure; we must rise up early, and late take rest. Nor shall we ever want employment, even though our days should be prolonged beyond the common span of life. The stores of natural knowledge; the treasures of the mineral, vegetable, and animal world; the relation and proportions of number and magnitude; the wonders of the heavens above and the earth beneath, will afford ample scope for the longest life and the greatest talents.

Nor are the labours of moral knowledge and virtuous discipline, less arduous and extensive. To trace the faculties, operations, and tendencies of the mental powers; to mark their limits, subordinations, and uses; to investigate the reciprocal influence of the mind and body upon each other; to root out the inveteracy of prejudice; to bend the will; to correct the temper; to subdue the passions; to keep the heart with all diligence; to set a watch before the door of the lips: these are employments, which, if duly attended to, will leave no man either time to spare, or any portion of those abilities, which he has received, to lie waste and uncultivated.

Nor again will the duties of religion claim a less degree of exertion of our several talents. Man, as a reasonable creature, when he considers the great purposes for which he was sent into the world, must see that he has enough to do, and therefore

fore has need to do it with all his might. For religion is not the acquirement of a day, or the task of leisure: it requires the unremitting exercise and cultivation of every faculty. Who is there that sees not, that the duties we owe to God are of an active nature, and are not to be discharged with listless lips, and sluggish hearts, with cold insensibility or yawning indifference, but must be gone through with seriousness, attention, and fervour; our devotion must glow, our hearts must throb. Nor is this earnestness and attention less necessary in the duties we owe to ourselves and mankind. It will call for all our care to discharge aright the obligations of humanity, charity, justice, and fidelity. It will demand all our abilities to guard our words and actions, to tread with safety amidst the numerous enemies that surround us, to baffle the wiles of Satan; to resist the smiles of pleasure, to subdue the allurements of

youthful

youthful lust, to shun the contagion of evil example. Nor is this all: there are also many heavenly graces to be acquired, many spiritual virtues to be practised, and many severe trials to be sustained: for, in the language of scripture, there is "a warfare of the soul;" there is "a fight "of faith;" there is "a race of glory," which will require the Christian to summon every faculty to the discharge of its proper functions in life.

Has any man, again, received particular and supereminent talents from the hand of Providence? Is he raised above the ordinary level of humanity by superior abilities, wealth, dignity, or influence? Let him not vainly conceive, that no account is to be given of them to his Almighty Benefactor. No man is born for himself alone; his talents, whatever they are, were given to him for the good of others, as well as of himself: freely

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he has received, and freely must he give; and from him, to whom much has been given, will much also be required.

His abilities are lent him to improve men in knowledge or happiness, to discover the means of promoting their present conveniency by useful inventions, to explain the difficulties under which lower conceptions labour, to defend the cause of truth, and to promote the interests of virtue and religion in the world.

And in the same manner also he stands accountable for his riches, which are only a trust committed to his charge. There must be different ranks of men in life: the order of the world requires, and the changes and chances of it will ever cause, that there should be low as well as high, poor as well as rich. It is therefore the duty of the rich man, as a good steward of the gift of God, to obviate the necessary inconveniences arising from this difference,

ference, by feeding the hungry and clothing the naked, and by providing for the children of affliction, who, through the various casualties of a world of change, are unable to provide for themselves.

And it is no less the duty of every man, who possesses superior dignity, or influence, to exert them in supporting the weak and protecting the oppressed, in discouraging presumptuous villany and calling forth modest worth, and in leading men on to goodness by the powerful attraction of shining example; which ought, above all things, to claim the attention of men in exalted stations, as being a matter of the utmost consequence to the world. For the man, who toils in the vale of obscurity, can do little harm or good by his example: whilst living, his frailties or excellencies are known only to a narrow circle; and when he dies, he falls unnoticed, and soon is remembered no more. But the great are placed on

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an eminence. Numbers are within the immediate sphere of their irradiation: the blaze of their virtues is conspicuous to all; and, whilst all admire, some will catch the flame of benevolence, and endeavour to imitate that noble spirit of philanthropy, which rejoices in every opportunity of employing itself for the benefit of mankind.

The obligation upon every man thus to exert the talents he has received, for the good of himself and others, is clearly deducible from a variety of topics of argument. The first and greatest of these is the example of God himself. In the language of scripture, "God is love;" and the voice of reason and nature speaks the same language. It was love, which called man from nothing into existence; from mingling with the clods of the valley to the view and capacity of immortality. Love breathes through the whole creation, and meets us wherever we turn our eyes; but,

but, above all, it shines forth in the great work of redemption, which was planned and executed by the most wonderful effort of divine benevolence, for the restoration of a lost and rebellious race. And, in imitation of this parental love of God the Father, God the Son also is described as exerting, through his whole life, the powers of omnipotence in doing good to the souls and bodies of men.

Now these sublime characters of the Godhead are not held forth to our view for adoration and praise alone, though they have the amplest claim to both from every considerate mind, but also for our example and imitation, that we should by them be induced, in our several stations, to make a good use of the talents committed to us; and endeavour, as far as human infirmity allows, to be perfect in good works, even as our Father in heaven is perfect.

But,

But, though God's authority and example be undoubtedly the best and strongest argument for the vigorous application of our talents for the good of others, yet the obligation to it may also clearly be deduced from the constitution of man himself.

Man is formed by nature for a reciprocation of good offices. He cannot subsist a single moment without help; from the cradle to the grave he wants it. For, though in society, where mutual wants are supplied by mutual assistance, he is the most powerful of all beings; yet, when solitary, he is the most timid and helpless. Since, therefore, he requires aid, the duty must certainly be reciprocal to give it; since he cannot live without receiving freely, he is indisputably bound to give freely.

Indeed, this exertion of our talents, in a reciprocation of good offices, is the

bond and cement, which can alone keep firm and compacted the jarring and discordant interets of civil society. For, take away the power, the obligation, and the will of doing good to other; let selfishness and an avaricious desire of monopolizing the blessings of life prevail; and men will soon become uncontrolable savages, without bond or capacity of union.

And, even setting aside the clear deductions of argument upon this point, we may safely affirm that every man, in whom nature is not distorted from her original form, must be sensible of this obligation from the strong impulse of those principles of benevolence, which are deeply engraven on his heart.

I will not enter into the dispute, how far God has given us an internal sense correspondent to every external object or moral perfection; but, I think, it will be no

no presumption to say, that benevolence is either an implanted principle, or grows up so readily with our earliest years, that it may justly be considered as such. Every man feels it within himself, where nature is suffered to act without restraint. We are irresistibly impelled to drop the tear of pity over the sufferings of distress, by a voice within us, whose language cannot be mistaken, though its dictates are too often stifled by the intervention of baser passions. And even then, we cannot forbear admiring in others what we are unwilling to practise ourselves; and the impenetrable heart of the miser himself will secretly applaud the charity, which it cannot be prevailed upon to imitate.

Now such an impulse as this, so strong, so universal, so invariable, can be no other than the pure voice of nature, proclaiming to every man the indispensable duty of doing all the good in his power

to his fellow-creatures: "freely thou hast "received, freely give."

And if this duty of giving freely be obligatory upon all men, it is surely doubly so upon us, who, besides the blessings which we have received in common with the rest of mankind, are also partakers of others of a peculiar nature, from the munificence of our illustrious founders and benefactors; blessings which demand our warmest acknowledgements, and, at the same time, give us both the fairest opportunity, and hold forth the strongest argument, for cultivating our talents to the best advantage.

We are placed here, by the hand of antient liberality, as it were in a safe asylum from the turbulence and follies of mankind; in which our researches after knowledge can never be interrupted by the rudeness of ignorance, or insulted by the bluster of insolence; in which our

eyes

eyes can never be pained by the sight of unattainable honours, or our hearts lacerated by the violence of ungratified ambition; in which every unruffled passion may move in subjection to reason, and every faculty conspire in the undisturbed pursuit of religious, moral, and scientific improvement. And yet, our retirement, though admirably calculated for these valuable purposes, is not that gloomy species of monastic seclusion, which would strike us off, as useless links, from the chain of social existence, or condemn us, like the superstitious Bramin, to drag the fetters of misery in the horrors of solitude; but rather a pleasing secession, which, whilst it abstracts us from the tumultuous scenes of active life, gives us the fairest opportunity of exercising the amiable duties of every relative virtue.

It is, farther, no small addition to our happiness in these sacred retreats of sci-

ence, that we are amply secured, by the munificence of our respective founders and benefactors, from the stings of dependence, and the anxious forebodings of destitution; of both which the secular clergy are too often compelled to taste a large and bitter potion. But here, every man is as independent as reason can wish, or the well-tempered subordination of society allow. He is never under the hard necessity of sacrificing his understanding to the man he despises. He knows not what it is to watch the nod of folly, or court the smile of ignorance. He can spurn, with honest indignation, the idea of bearing the insults of pride with awe, and the injuries of oppression with tameness. Nor do the cares of future support embitter his hours, or impede his generous pursuits. For the same hand of munificence, which supports him here, has provided for him a comfortable and respectable maintenance in the world; where he may at once enjoy, and communicate

to others, those fruits of useful knowledge, which have been planted and brought to full perfection of maturity in this genial soil.

And as we are here sheltered from the intrusion of present care and the fear of future want, so we have the amplest scope for attaining solid happiness, by enriching our minds with the treasures of wisdom and virtue. For, in this place, the torch of science, being successively transmitted from hand to hand, blazes out with uninterrupted and improving lustre. We have those, at our first entrance into the untried regions of literature, to guide our doubtful steps, who have trod before us the same paths; who are ever ready to guard us from the rocks of error, to check the deviations of folly, to restrain the petulance of presumption, and to rouse us from the encroaching slumbers of indolence and inattention.

And, whilst we are thus shielded from danger, on the one hand, every thing around us, on the other, conspires to lead us on to a progress in whatever is "lovely "and of good report." Our regulated hours of rest and devotion, our short and simple meals, our abstraction from scenes of gaiety and dissipation, are all admirably fitted for preserving that temperance of body and equanimity of soul, which are essentially necessary to a life of study. Nor are our studies themselves less admirably fitted to form us to every noble, amiable, and useful purpose of life. The stores of classic knowledge cannot fail to excite, in every youthful breast, a most ardent love of that liberty, for which so many illustrious heroes of antiquity bled and died. The weapons of dialectic skill will enable us to repel with success the attacks of error, and support the cause of truth. The lessons of Ethic discipline will teach us a proper knowledge of ourselves

selves and others, and of the duties resulting from the several relations we bear in life. And the discoveries of natural philosophy, supported and improved by the subsidiary aids of geometry and mathematics, will lead us to a knowledge and admiration of the one supreme Being, in all his works, and enable us to apply our knowledge to the best of all purposes, that of being useful to our fellow-creatures. And our desire to excel in all these branches of profitable learning cannot but receive the highest impulse from the very genius of the place, in which our studies are prosecuted. For, surely, it is impossible for an ingenuous mind to view those venerable shades and structures, where a Newton, an Erasmus, or a Tillotson, explored and fathomed the depths of science, without a concentration of the noblest ideas, and an enthusiastic ardor of attempting a generous, though distant, emulation of their exalted and immortal excellence.

If such, then, are the signal blessings, which the respective members of this learned Body have freely received from the hand of antient munificence, it is surely a duty incumbent upon them freely to communicate the fruits of them, for the general benefit of mankind. The representing the duty of every man in the blessings he enjoys under the notion of a stewardship, is a favourite allusion with Christ and his apostles; and we know, from the highest authority, that "it is "required in stewards, that a man be "found faithful." And, surely, no trust or stewardship can be more sacred or important than that which is committed to our charge; the forming the minds and manners of those, who are hereafter to fill every leading department in church and state, to what is decent, virtuous, and praise-worthy. We ought therefore, by every allurement of laudable example, by every effort of constant and diligent instruction, by a vigorous discouragement of

of vice, and by a constant and impartial remuneration of real merit, on all occasions, to shew, that we have not lost sight of the great purposes for which we are placed here, and for the discharge of which we professedly receive the emoluments and honours of our several stations and appointments.

And as the duty we owe to our benefactors thus loudly calls upon us to be faithful in our stewardship, so a regard to our own interest likewise no less forcibly demands this at our hands. We are as a candle placed upon an eminence, upon which the eyes of the world are naturally fixed, and in which the smallest decay of light will readily be discerned, and as readily pointed out by the malicious finger of envy, to the observation of those numerous enemies, who would rejoice, that "the name of this our Israel should "be no more in remembrance." For, surely, we want not to be told, that the bigoted

bigoted Papist would, with singular pleasure, view the extinction of those two glorious luminaries, by whose radiance the dark clouds of papal superstition were dispelled, and life and immortality brought to light, in their native purity and splendor. Nor need we again be told, that the numerous sectaries, whose growing influence in the state is already too perceptible, regard with a malignant eye these learned seminaries, which are the great barriers against their schemes of encroachment and innovation, and the firm bulwarks and supports of that establishment, against which all their arrows of rage and detraction are levelled.

And whilst our enemies thus regard us with a malignant jealousy, our best friends cannot but look up to us with the tenderest feelings of anxiety and concern. They know with sorrow, that malevolent reports are gone abroad in the world. They hear, on every side, that the reins of discipline

discipline are relaxed; that dissipation and unnecessary expence are enormously increasing; that modesty and subordination, the antient and necessary fences of good order, are suffered to be broken down and trampled upon by the younger members of the University; that propriety of character and decency of deportment are little regarded by the higher orders, and those who are in authority; that the pure streams of the Muses are polluted by the turbid influx of political contention; that intestine cabal and foreign influence are suffered to operate, to the great discouragement of merit and industry, and in direct contradiction to the most solemn restrictions of antient statutes, in the disposal of the most important trusts; whilst, on the other hand, the genuine and essential purposes of academical institution; the promotion of learning and piety; the advancing of the honour of God and the benefit of man, are notoriously neglected and disregarded.

That

That such reports as these have gone abroad into the world, no man, who is conversant in it, can be ignorant. And, however desirous the friends of the University may be to throw, with averted eyes, the veil of filial respect over parental infirmity; however little they may be disposed to give credit to insinuations, which they are willing to hope are either groundless, or, at least, greatly exaggerated, by charging upon all what is applicable only to few; yet they cannot but press it in the strongest terms upon every member of this learned Body, in his several station, more especially at this time, to guard against every thing, which may give even the smallest semblance or colour of truth to them. For, should that phrenzy of reform, which so strikingly marks the temper of the present day, extend its wild progress in razing, or modelling anew, the venerable structures of antiquity, who shall dare to say, that the strong hand of power, invited by the lust

of

of rapine, or impelled by the suggestions of malevolence, may not* a second time lay hold of such injurious representations, as plausible handles for rescinding, or abridging, those privileges and advantages, which are the pride and ornament of our present establishment?

But, even supposing apprehensions of this kind to be, as, I trust they ever will be, groundless under the government of a Prince equally distinguished for his love and knowledge of polite literature; yet there are other motives, of a more generous nature, which ought to stimulate every member of this learned body to a full and vigorous exertion of his abilities. The flame of science burns bright in a sister kingdom†, and seems ready to rival, if not eclipse, the splendor of these antient seats of the Muses. She has al-

* See the Proceedings of the Commissioners in the times of Puritanism.

† Scotland.

ready

ready the reputation, at least, of excelling * in one branch of knowledge, of great and immediate importance to mankind; and it cannot be denied, that the palm of historic excellence is justly bestowed upon her numerous writers, by the united suffrages of the best and most impartial judges. There are other institutions also in our own kingdom, which, though not yet grown to full maturity, are rising rapidly to eminence, and are eagerly supported by those, who are no friends to those principles of civil and ecclesiastical polity, which it has been the glory of this place, at all times, firmly to profess and maintain. Nor, again, is it to be dissembled, though much to be lamented, that the sons of many of our most distinguished families are sent abroad to seek for culture in foreign climes, and bring back with them those baneful seeds of infidelity, which have

* Medicine.

been

been so widely disseminated through the land. Whether this arises from the caprice of fashion, or from some supposed defect in the plans of academical institution at home, I will not take upon me to determine; but of this I have the fullest conviction, that all these combined circumstances call loudly upon every one of us to support the credit of our common parent; which can only be done by the strictest attention to discipline and improvement in learning and virtue. For, though we can boast of every advantage, which can recommend, or adorn, a place of education; though our fabricks are venerable and commodious; though our institutions are wise and salutary, and our emoluments and immunities honourable and ample; though we can display a series of names, the most illustrious which ever graced the page of history, to animate us in the pursuit of science; yet all these will be of little avail, unless we make it appear to the world, by our distinguished

tinguished pre-eminence in every branch of useful knowledge, that we apply them to their proper uses, and that as we have freely received, so also we freely give. For, however the tree may be planted in a rich and friendly soil; however its branches may be stately, and its foliage thick and umbrageous; yet, unless it blossoms also, and, like the tree of knowledge, brings forth fruit "good "for food, and pleasant to the eyes, "and to be desired to make one wise," the united voice of mankind will agree in one short and equitable sentence of condemnation, "cut it down: why cumbreth "it the ground?"

But as it is my earnest wish, so also it is my firm persuasion, that this will never be our case. And, whilst I recite the names of our most illustrious Founders and Benefactors, I trust that every academic breast will glow with a generous ardour of deserving by his future conduct,

conduct, those honours and emoluments, which were intended by them, not to be the instruments of promoting monastic idleness and brutal sensuality, but the just rewards of distinguished excellence in discipline, learning, virtue, and piety.

SERMON LXVII.

ROM. x. 15.

How shall they preach, except they be sent?

IT was long the darling project of the friends of the Romish communion to subvert the foundations of our established church in this nation, by endeavouring to call in question the mission and regular appointment of her clergy. But this project, like many others, not only proved abortive, but redounded to the eternal disgrace and infamy of its contrivers. The arrows of falsehood and chicanery, though dipped in poison, and lanced by the arm of pretended infalli-

bility, were unable to pierce the impenetrable shield of our holy faith. And, what must have been still more mortifying to the church of Rome, she found an unanswerable opponent in one of her own sons, whom the mere force of conviction compelled, in opposition to every worldly view, to stand forth as the champion of truth and protestantism.

But long we had not enjoyed the fruits of this victory over one set of enemies, before the peace of our Zion was again disturbed by the attacks of another; who do not indeed call in question the regular mission and appointment of her clergy, but deny the necessity of any appointment at all; and who therefore, self-taught and self-commissioned, take upon them to preach,—I will not say, the pure word of God; for that they seldom preach;—but rather their own crude fancies and distempered notions; "who, as St. Cy-
"prian says of the Methodists and im-
"postors

"postors of his time, of their own ac-
"cord, without God's appointment, set
"themselves up amid their tumultuous
"assemblers; who constitute themselves
"rulers without any law of ordination;
"who assume the name of teachers and
"bishops, when no man gives them the
"power;" and thus, creeping into houses and conventicles, lead captive silly men, and silly women; too often, it is well known, literally laden with their sins.

When, therefore, our pastoral office is thus openly invaded; when we are publicly arraigned as incapable of instructing the flock of Christ committed to our charge; I hope I shall not employ your time either uselessly, or in a manner foreign to the present occasion, by endeavouring to shew, in opposition to these false teachers, that there always has been, from the first planting of Christianity, a regular designation and appointment of a particular set of men, to whom, and to

whom only, the office of teaching and preaching was committed; which the Apostle here calls "being sent."

In pursuance of this design, it shall be my business,

1st. To inquire, what it is to be sent as a teacher or minister;

2dly, To shew, that such as are not sent, may not lawfully preach; and,

3dly, That such as are sent, both may and ought to preach.

In answer to the first enquiry, what it is to be sent, I cannot speak more satisfactorily than in the words of the 23d Article of our Church, which says; "Those we ought to judge lawfully called "and sent, which be chosen and called "to this work (that is the office of public "preaching and ministering the sacra-

"ments),

"ments), by men, who have public au-
"thority given unto them in the congre-
"gation (that is, the Church; for so the
"word congregation signifies in that ar-
"ticle), to call and send ministers into
"the Lord's vineyard." And the same article says, "That it is not lawful (that "is, by the law of God, on which the "articles are supposed to be grounded,) "for any man to take upon him that of-"fice before he be lawfully called and "sent to execute the same."

And this has in fact been verified from the first appearance of Christianity in the world. For even Christ himself assumed not this office without a public commission from God, by a visible descent of the Holy Ghost upon him, and an audible voice from Heaven proclaiming him to be the Messias: "He glorified not himself "to be made an High Priest, says the "Apostle, but he that said unto him, "thou art my Son, this day have I be-"gotten thee." Nor did any of his

Apostles presume to take the work of the ministry upon them, till he gave them particular commission to do so. Thus he first ordained twelve, whom he also named Apostles, and sent them to preach the kingdom of God. And afterwards he ordained seventy others to be assistant in a subordinate station. But we may remark, that during his continuance upon earth, none besides himself ordained ministers of either of the foregoing orders: but he only, who was "Lord of the harvest, sent "forth labourers into his harvest."

But after he was risen from the dead, he enlarged his commission to his Apostles and their successors for ever, giving them a power (besides that of ministering his holy word and sacraments, which they could do before) to ordain also gospel-ministers in his place and stead. "As "my Father has * sent me, says he, even

* John xvii. 18. xx. 21—24.

"so

"so I send you. And lo, I am with "you alway, even unto the end of the "world*." And accordingly we find the Apostles ordaining such of all † orders; the lowest, that of Deacons, to take care of the widows and poor, and also to preach and to baptize: above these they ordained Elders, that is, Presbyters or Priests, in every city (and who are also sometimes called Bishops), to feed the flock of Christ, which he had purchased with his blood; and these had a farther power of administering the sacrament of the Lord's supper and absolving penitents; that is, authoritative benedictions and absolutions. And lastly, for a supply of their own absence or mortality, they ordained others of an order superior to the two former, whom they then called their partners, and fellow-helpers, and companions in labour; such as Timothy and Titus, Sosthenes, Sylvanus, and Epaphroditus; that is, Apostles, as they themselves were; by which name the last of

* Matt. xxviii. 20.

† Acts i. 20. xiii. 2—6.

them

them is expressly called in * Holy Scripture, and which is equally applicable to all the rest †. And these had yet a farther power of laying on hands, that is, to confirm and ordain: upon which account we find St. Paul cautioning Timothy to ‡ "lay "hands suddenly on no man."

Against this it has sometimes been urged, that Timothy was ordained, as St. Paul acquaints us, "with the laying on "of the hands of the Presbytery." Admitting this to be meant of his ordination, which, however, many learned men question; yet the Apostles being sometimes called Presbyters, and even sometimes Deacons, in the Scriptures (which even our Saviour himself is sometimes called, as well as Presbyter or Bishop, 1 Pet. ii. 25.), they might be the persons intended by that name §. Or, if more Presbyters

* Philip. ii. 25.

† Vide Hammond on this subject, p. 512.

‡ Dr. Hammond confines these words to the absolution of penitents; but see Whitby in locum, 1 Tim. v. 21.

§ So Ignatius calls the Apostles expressly, ἐκκλησίας πρεσβυτέριον. [Epist. ad Philadelph.]

be

be meant by it, they might then assist, as they do now with us, in the ordination of a Priest, to shew their concurrence with him of the superior order in so pious a work. But still it is most certain, that St. Paul, who was an Apostle, did lay on his hands with them; and that, as if he meant to obviate any mistake that might arise from his own words, he afterwards, in another place, ascribes the whole of Timothy's ordination to the "laying on of "his own hands*." 2 Tim. i. 6.

Upon the whole then it appears, that there were three distinct orders of clergy in the Christian church, from the very beginning of it: of the first of which was Christ himself; and after him his Apostles, who have, as I have observed, sometimes the names of the two inferior orders, because their superior order included them both; and then those, whom the Apostles ordained for their partners and fellow-

*Τῆς δὲ Ἐφέσου Τιμόθεος μὲν ὑπὸ Παύλου [χειροτονηθη]. Const. Ap. L. 7. c. 45.

So Theophylact interprets it; ὅτε σε ἐχειροτόνουν ἀπόστολοι.

helpers,

helpers, and who, in the apostolical age, were also called Apostles. Of the second were the Apostles, whilst Christ their High-Priest taught upon earth; and after the Apostles were advanced to be his vicegerents, those that are usually in the scriptures called Elders, that is, Presbyters or Priests, and also Bishops. And of the third were, during our Saviour's time, the seventy Disciples; and afterwards those that are called Deacons. And of all these orders, those of the first alone had the power of ordination.

But after the apostolical age, there being some things peculiar to the Apostles, which were not communicable to their successors; they, in humble respect and reverence to them*, declined the name of Apostles, and contented themselves to be called Bishops; which was before a name given to Presbyters, but from thenceforward appropriated to the superior order, by way of distinction. So that immedi-

* Τὰς νῦν καλουμένας ἐπισκόπους Ἀποστόλους ἀνόμασαν πρότερον δὲ χρόνῳ—&c. Theodoret. in 1 Tim. iii. 1.

ately

ately from and after the death of St. John, who for some time survived the other eleven Apostles, we find the three orders regularly distinguished by the names of Bishops, Priests, and Deacons*, as they now are; and the power of ordination constantly confined to the first of them†. [Constit. ut supra].

That the account I have here given of this important matter is the only true one, I might abundantly evince from the sacred writings and the volumes of the primitive Fathers; I might too shew, that it was exactly derived from the Jewish constitution, as established by God himself, would either time permit, or did occasion require it. But it is not my present design to lead you through the thorny paths of controversy. It is enough that we are able, when called upon, to defend the received practice of our established church against the innovations of one set of men and the corruptions of another.

* Vide Sancti Hermæ Pastor, L. 1. S. 5.

† Καλέσαντες ὑπὸ πάντων πρεσβύτερους, καὶ προσευξάμενοι μετὰ νηστειῶν παρέθεντο αὐτοὺς τῷ κυρίῳ, εἰς ὃν πεπιστεύκεισαν. Acts xiv. 23.

And

And that this succession, which our church, I bless God, hath faithfully preserved, may be of the greater use and benefit, it is carefully provided, that all whom she admits into any holy function, may have proper qualifications and abilities for it, as far as human foresight can judge of them; such as competent natural parts and faculties, cultivated and improved by sound learning and skill in languages, by serious study and frequent meditation, especially in divine matters, digested into a sound and orthodox faith, and exemplified by a suitable life and conversation; together with a modest assurance that they are inwardly moved and inclined by the Holy Ghost, in a rational and providential (not an enthusiastic and unaccountable) way, to take upon them that office and ministration; forasmuch as they find the principal motive determining them to this choice to be a fervent zeal to serve God, for promoting his glory and the salvation of man.

Having thus shewn who the persons are, who may properly be said to be sent;

I pro-

I proceed, 2dly, to shew, that such as are not thus sent, may not lawfully preach.

The Apostle says in the words of the text, "How shall they preach?" Which is indeed somewhat more than if he had directly said, they shall not preach. For, 1st, "How shall they preach? With "what right and authority? By what "authority doest thou these things, said "the Jews to our Saviour, and who gave "thee this authority?" And had he not been able to give the world sufficient satisfaction in this point, both himself and his religion must soon have sunk and perished together. He was therefore at the expence of many miracles to make good this point, and by them has given all men just reason to declare with Nicodemus their full and certain assurance of it: "We know that thou art a teacher come "from God; for no man can do these "miracles that thou doest, except God "be with him."

And from him the Apostles received their authority, who expressly sent them

to preach, and enabled them to give the like evidences of their being sent of God, as he himself had given; enlarging their commission also to all nations, and empowering them and their successors to ordain fit persons for the work of the ministry for all ages to come. "But "no man must take this honour to himself, but he that is called of God, as "was Aaron." And to pretend to a call from God, without a commission from his church, according to his own divine order and appointment, is to set up God against himself; which, unless we can make contradictions true and God a liar, can never be right.

2dly, How shall they preach? With what ability? It is required by St. Paul, as a qualification of a Bishop or Presbyter, that he be "apt to teach;" that he be "able by sound doctrine both to "exhort and to convince the gainsayers." And though the preaching of the cross, the doctrine of a crucified Saviour, may to unbelievers, that judge only according to carnal reason and sense, seem to

be

be foolishness; yet to them that believe, it is the power of God unto salvation, in the hands of such as the same Apostle calls "able ministers of the New Testa-"ment:" and such, he there says, God does make them, by opening their understandings, that they may understand the scriptures. But, that God will make any such, who will not comply with his ways and method of doing it, can neither be expected nor proved.

3dly, How shall they preach? With what purpose and design? Their pretences are indeed usually very specious, and the ends they would seem to aim at truly glorious and excellent. They are moved, say they, to take this ministry upon them by mere duty and necessity; by a secret impulse of the Spirit, inclining them to it; and in tender regard to the glory of God, and the salvation of souls. These are indeed specious pretences; but what is all this at the bottom, if rightly weighed, but to fly in the face of divine wisdom? God has, we see, by a regular designation, marked out

a succession of men appointed for these very purposes: for these men therefore, to break into this order, under pretence of promoting the salvation of souls, what is it but to say, that the means appointed by all-seeing wisdom are insufficient to bring about the ends designed by him? What is it but to build upon God's foundation the hay and stubble of their own inventions? Well might, therefore, the Apostle call them "false Apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves "into the Apostles of Christ." Though they come to you, therefore, in sheep's clothing, yet inwardly they are ravening wolves; and therefore you are expressly cautioned by our Saviour to beware of them. For not having entered by the door into the sheep-fold, but climbed up some other way, he assures us, they are all but thieves and robbers; they rob God of his honour, and the church of her peace. Having, therefore, neither a just authority to preach, nor proper qualifications for it; and their designs in doing it being always presumptuous and often evil, it is, I think, sufficiently evident, that

that such as are not sent, should not presume to preach.

But 3dly, they that are sent, both may and ought to preach. How shall they preach, says the Apostle in the text, except they be sent? Except they be sent: plainly implying, that to be sent, is that, which does authorize and empower; or farther, which does bind and oblige them to do it. Our blessed Saviour himself, as you have heard, was sent to preach; he was a teacher come from God. And he sent his Apostles, and they others, to teach and to exhort; and they again successively, throughout all ages of the world, were "to commit the things delivered "to them by the Apostles unto faithful "men that should be able to teach others "also."

This is that work for which, and unto which, they are appointed. Both God and his church have sent them upon this very business, and they contradict the mind of both, if they do not perform it. This is their particular calling, and in

this they must abide; that they may approve themselves faithful stewards of the grace given unto them, and, "as workmen that need not be ashamed, may "rightly divide the word of truth."

And indeed, woe unto them, if they preach not the gospel: preach it with unwearied diligence and constant perseverance; always bearing in their minds that importunate and solemn injunction of St. Paul to Timothy, "I charge thee, "therefore, before God, and the Lord "Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick "and the dead at his appearing and his "kingdom; preach the word; be instant "in season, out of season; reprove, re"buke, exhort with all long-suffering and "doctrine." Nor must they be diverted from the faithful discharge of their ministry by the most fierce opposition, or severe commands of persecuting powers. Blessed be God, we live in times, when there is little prospect that these hard trials of our faith will fall to our lot. But should it so happen, the noble answer of the Apostle's is our rule: "we ought to

"obey

" obey God rather than men;" and their practice thereupon our example: " who " filled Jerusalem with their doctrine, and " daily in the temple and in every house " ceased not to teach and to preach Jesus " Christ."

Since then you see, my reverend brethren, from what has been said, that we are truly and regularly sent, and are therefore to preach the word of him who sent us; and since preaching is an instituted means for promoting the glory of God and the good of souls, we ought carefully to adapt our discourses to this excellent end; teaching and informing the judgments, and inclining the wills and affections of all our hearers, so to believe and so to live, as becometh Christians.

And to make our preaching the more effectual, we must take care to practise what we preach: to let our light so shine before men, in word, in conversation, in charity, in faith, in purity, that they, seeing our good works, may glorify our Father which is in heaven; and that

those, who are of the contrary part, may have no evil thing to say of us. And if any, notwithstanding, will maliciously reproach us, we have that way to clear ourselves, which the wise Plato resolved upon, so to live, that none shall believe them.

Therefore, seeing we have received this ministry, as we have received mercy, let us not faint, but let us renounce the hidden things of dishonesty; not walking in craftiness; not handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth let us commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. Let us feed the flock which is among us, and be an example to them; knowing that when the Chief Shepherd shall appear, we shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away; and that they, who turn many to righteousness, shall shine as the stars for ever and ever.

And if we, my brethren of the laity, be thus truly and regularly sent, as you have heard

heard we are, then you are to receive us as such, and so to account of us as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. And if it be our duty to preach, it is yours to hear; to frequent our public assemblies at the time and place appointed, and attend the sermons we preach. For the Apostle's question immediately before my text, "How "shall they hear without a preacher?" may well enough be inverted, and we may with equal justice ask, "How shall we "preach without a hearer?"

Brethren, we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake; who, as St. Paul tells us, "has given some Apostles, "and some Prophets, and some Evan-"gelists, and some Pastors and Teachers;" the design of which is added in the following verses, "for the perfecting of the "saints, for the work of the ministry, for "the edifying of the body of Christ; till "we all come in the unity of the faith "and of the knowledge of the Son of "God, unto a perfect man, unto the

"measure of the stature of the fulness of "Christ." And surely there must be diligent application and due attendance upon their ministry for attaining so great and good an end. Surely men must put themselves in the way to Heaven, by frequenting the house of God, if ever they mean to go to Heaven. Surely they must tread the courts of the Lord's house here, if ever they wish to enter the courts of his glory hereafter.

Must it not, therefore, afford matter of melancholy consideration to every serious Christian to see so general a neglect and decay of public worship? What shall we think of those (I will not say, the young and inconsiderate only, for the grave and grey-headed are too often among the number), who never enter the house of prayer but by sudden fits and starts, through accidental whim or childish curiosity, to kill the splenetic hours of a rainy Sunday, or display the elegance of a new fashion? And what again shall we think of those still more unhappy persons, who never come there at all? What can

we

we think, but that they are lost to all sense of shame, decency, and religion; that they neither fear God nor regard man? For sure I am, that the laws both of reason, God, and man, make it indispensably every man's duty to frequent his church; and if these will not bind him, I freely own, I know not what can.

I do not indeed take upon me to say, that no cause will excuse our absence from church; but surely I may say, that every cause will not. We may be allowed at proper times to consult the health and convenience of our bodies, if need so requires; but we should remember, that we have souls as well as bodies; and that if the wants and infirmities of one be great, the wants and infirmities of the other are still greater, and of infinitely more consequence to us.

But were men seriously disposed to obey God; were they at all in earnest about religion; had they any real concern about their salvation; they would neither find out, nor embrace, such trifling pleas

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as these; they would neither study pretences to evade their duty, nor excuses to palliate the neglect of it. For proof of this, we need only look back to the days of old. There was a time, when men thought the house of God pleasant, and his dwellings amiable. There was a time, when men thought it their duty seven times a day to praise God for his righteous judgments. There was a time, when a wise king declared, that he had rather be a door-keeper in the house of his God, than enjoy all the pleasures the tents of ungodliness could afford. But these happy days of piety are now no more; and we must now content ourselves, if we can prevail upon the tenth part of our flocks to devote two hours in the week to the service of that God, from whom all their daily blessings flow.

But whence, my brethren, arises this dreadful and alarming change? Have we found out any new and compendious method of salvation? Is not the God, whom we adore in every age, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever? Is not the gospel still

still the gospel? Have we not still souls that must be eternally happy, or eternally miserable? Are we not still men; that is, creatures frail, fallible, and dependent? Have we no sins to pardon? Have we no mercies to acknowledge? Have we no blessings to request for ourselves, our families, and our country? Why then do we desert those altars, from whence cometh our salvation? Why do we think the little we do in the service of God too much; whilst they thought every thing they could do too little to win heaven?

But whilst I blame those, who frequent no place of worship, I cannot commend their custom, who frequent every place of worship; who wander into fields and conventicles after every novel and self-commissioned teacher. I cannot call such a practice less than indecent, and if I had called it more, I think I might have justified the expression. For if it be contrary to the design of God for them to preach, it must be contrary to his will for us to hear. I am sure a Prophet of old said, "The Priest's lips should keep know-

" ledge; therefore the people should learn " the law at his mouth:" and he adds this solemn reason for it; " for he is the mes- " senger of the Lord of Hosts."

I know the usual pretence of such people is, that they go there to seek for the means of salvation. But this pretence is no less false than it is frivolous. No man, who has the word of God in his hand, and the sacraments of God in his church, can want the means of salvation. So that if the clergy of the established church were even more ignorant and despicable than these our pretended apostles too often represent them, yet no man, through their default, need have his salvation endangered. For even our church herself doth teach, " that the grace of " God's gifts and sacraments are no way " diminished, to such as receive them by " faith, by the inability or wickedness of " those who minister them."

However, though it is indeed an undeniable truth, that in every human institution, the evil will ever be mingled with the

the good, and therefore I mean not to defend either the ability or the piety of every minister of the church, too many of whom are in both a disgrace to their holy function; yet I would ask any unprejudiced man, whether it is more reasonable to expect good lives and efficacious grace in those who minister in holy things in the way of God's own appointment, or in those, who in defiance of that appointment, and in contempt of the laws of their country, disturb the peace and unity of the church by novel doctrines and needless divisions?

And as to the ability of these men, who thus upon every occasion disparage the learning and acquirements of the clergy, I will say, and my own particular station enables me to say it with certainty, that much the greater part of them are men of gross and invincible ignorance, men, who are babes in Christ, men unacquainted with the very first principles and evidences of that religion they profess to teach; men, who after attempting without success to come in at the door of

the church, have been fain to climb up some other way; and then have found no better cloak for their own ignorance, than to rail at those, whose abilities have entitled them to that dignity, which they in vain attempted to reach.

Unless men therefore can shew, that these self-commissioned teachers have found out a new way of salvation, or that there is any difficulty in the old one; unless they can shew, that their extemporaneous effusions are preferable to the sober and sublime words of our liturgy; unless they can shew, that the inventions of man are better than the express appointment of God; till they can do all this, I would advise them to adhere to the worship of their fathers, and to follow those lawful guides and pastors, who are appointed, both by divine and human authority, to minister to them in holy things. And let them not doubt, but that the means of salvation may be had at home as well as by deserting their families and occupations to ramble abroad, and that God will be found of them, who diligently

seek him, as well in a church, as in fields or tabernacles; for he is not far from every one of us.

And whilst I condemn those, who thus ramble from field to field, or from tabernacle to tabernacle for instruction, I will not, I cannot approve their practice, who spend their Sundays in rambling from church to church. I mean not to give offence to any man who does this; but let the censure fall where it will, I must say, that it is an indecent, it is an unjustifiable custom, which ought to give offence to every sober mind. For, let me ask any serious and thinking person, Is it decent to spend the sabbath, which God commands to be kept holy, in this rambling and unsettled way? Is it decent either wholly to neglect the prayers of the church, or to come in when they are half finished? Is it decent to take off the devotions of a congregation by a noisy entrance or an impudent stare? And is it not much more indecent than all these, to turn their backs upon God's worship, which they too often do, if they happen not

not to like the voice of the minister or the appearance of the congregation; if the one has not the powers of eloquence to soothe their ears, or the other affords not the charms of beauty to captivate their eyes?

I know farther, such men will tell me, that they go to hear the best preachers; that is, for so they mean by it, the most pleasing speakers: for it is the sound, much oftener than the sense, which constitutes their idea of a best preacher. But what an indecent and childish plea is this! Is the church then become a playhouse, where men are to seek for pleasure in hearing? Are the ministers of God become actors? Were they ordained to entertain you? Are our discourses to be weighed in the nice scales of criticism, or tried by the rules of oratory? Must we join with the popular phrenzy for politics or rant for liberty, before we can be heard? Must we adopt the language of fiction, and borrow the gestures of the theatre? Must we paint to your imaginations enamelled meads and purling streams,

gentle

gentle zephyrs and Elysian fields? Must we scatter from the pulpit the flowers of poetry, or weave the silken tale of romance, before ye will deign to listen to us? If some have done this to draw after them the admiration of gaping ignorance, sorry I am to say it, that they little understand either the nature of their own office, or the dignity of the religion they profess to teach, which stands not in need of borrowed ornaments or theatric rant. What! has truth then no weight? Have the tidings of salvation no influence? Has the word of God no power? Has heaven no charms? Has hell no terrors, unless we add to them poetic fiction or theatric gesture?

For shame, O Christians, think more nobly! spend not your sabbaths in pursuit of soft speeches or new-fangled instructors. Reflect for a moment for what different purposes we stand here, and for what different ends this place and day were intended. Judge, if not more favourably for us, at least more wisely for yourselves. It is indeed happy, where

sound conspires with sense, and the powers of eloquence adorn the truths of the Gospel: But, after all, is a well turned period or a mellifluous voice able to save you? Can they add to the certainty of God's word, or increase the riches of your Redeemer's kindness? Can they prevail upon God to remit his vengeance to the unrepenting sinner, or to hear the prayer of an impure supplicant? Can they secure heaven to you without faith, or happiness without works? No: if heaven and happiness be gained, they must be gained by other means than listening to soft speeches and pleasing instructions. It is not the voice of angels, nor the tongue of seraphs, that can save you: they may instruct and advise you: but you must save yourselves. And can nothing but the voice of the charmer instruct and advise you? May not a man be an useful and sufficient, though not a pleasing instructor? Was St. Paul wanting in knowledge, because he was rude in speech? Is not truth, truth, from whatever mouth it comes? Is not God able to bless his word in the hands of the meanest

of

of his servants, and out of the mouth of babes in utterance to ordain strength? Why then should men desert their proper and lawful teachers in the church, even though they are less pleasing ones? They may gain heaven under their instructions; and would they have more?

But this is not all: consider farther what a discouragement you throw upon the ministry by leaving your own churches. For to what purpose do we labour to feed our flocks, if they will not attend us? How shall we heal the diseased, if they fly from us? How shall we address ourselves to the particular circumstances and capacities of our congregations, if they are composed of a motley throng, whom chance or curiosity has brought together? It is a part of that solemn charge, which is given to every one of us at our admission into the ministry, "that we should "never cease to apply our care and dili-"gence, till we have brought all those, "who are or shall be committed to our "charge, to that agreement in the faith "and of the knowledge of God, and to

" that ripeness of age in Christ, that " there be no room left among them, " either for error in religion or vicious- " ness in life." But where, my brethren, shall we apply all this care and diligence in rooting out error and subduing vice, if you, who are committed to our charge, withdraw yourselves from us?

I would ask farther: Can any thing be more decent or amiable, than for those, who are united in the bonds of neighbourhood and civil intercourse, to unite also in their devotions to heaven? Can there again be a stronger sanction to that mutual benevolence and esteem, which ought to prevail more particularly amongst neighbours, than our joint participation of those blessed ordinances, by which we are sharers in God's mercies here, and hope to be angels together hereafter?

Again: Do not our parish churches in general come recommended to most of us by some circumstances, which no other places can have? Can we, for instance, forbear reflecting when we enter them, that

that we are now going into that house, which after some few short months or years is to be our last and long home? Will it not stop the levity of the gay to reflect, that they are now standing over those gloomy chambers of mortality, from which nor youth nor strength can secure them for one moment? Will it not damp the vanity of beauty and check the giddiness of youth to consider, that not all the bloom of nature, not all the flattery of admiration, not all the ardent vows of enraptured lovers can exempt them from the common stroke of fate, and that they may, within the revolution of a few days, enter these very doors a pale and loathsome spectacle of mortality? Is it not again a striking thought, that in this very place our ancestors worshipped the God of their fathers before us? Ask your hearts seriously, Is it nothing to reflect, that, in this very place, perhaps an aged father or tender mother offered up their last prayer to heaven for me and all their posterity? Is it nothing to reflect, that I now tread upon the ashes of a beloved husband, wife, or favourite child? Will their tombs

teach me no useful lessons? Will their mouldering remains inspire no serious thoughts? Will their example add no weight to the observations of the preacher, or my own reflections upon the vanity of life? Will their memory add no fervor to our devotions or earnestness to our repentance? If we think them in Abraham's bosom, safe from all the cares and toils of this mortal life, can our affections sleep or our prayers be languid, when we reflect, that it is on them we are to wing our way to that heaven, to which we piously hope they are gone before us? And if we think them in a state of misery, will that awaken no alarming thoughts? Will it be no terror to the guilty to think, that he is kneeling over the grave of a debauched companion, who is now soliciting a drop of water in hell to cool his tongue? Will he not naturally be led to consider, how small a space divides the living from the dead? Will he not naturally say, "His doom is irrevocably fixed, "and mine cannot be far off: what he is "now, may not I be to-morrow? Can I "then slumber on in my sins? Is it not

"time

"time for me to awake, and to cry out, "Men and brethren, what shall I do to "be saved?"

These are reflections, which must arise in every feeling breast: they cannot indeed affect all equally, but they must affect all in some degree; and I should think, should induce every man, (where there is not some very strong reason to the contrary) to prefer the worship of his church to that of barns and tabernacles.

I might add, that our parish churches commonly are endeared to us, as being the burying places of our families and friends. I know indeed the philosopher will tell me, that this is all weakness, and that it matters not where our bodies are laid. It may be so: it may be weakness, but it is a weakness, which wiser men than he have not been ashamed to countenance. "When I die," said one of the old prophets, to express his regard for one of his brethren, "bury me be-"sides him, let my bones lie by his "bones." And we constantly find it said

in the Old Testament, "he slept with his "fathers," "he was buried with his fa- "thers," "he went down to the grave of "his fathers." Such too was the constant voice of heathen antiquity. *Hic sacra, hic genus, hic majorum multa vestigia;—studioseque eorum etiam sepulchra contemplor*, were strong recommendations to the great master of Roman eloquence. And one of the best judges of human nature of our own country, very truly, though in the language of fiction, represents it as one of the greatest misfortunes of an unhappy old man, that he should not die and rest where his father before him had done:

"You have undone," says he, "a man of fourscore
years and three,
"That thought to fill his grave in quiet; yea,
"To die upon the bed my father dy'd,
"To lie close by his honest bones."

Winter's Tale, Act 4. Sc. 8.

And surely we must own, that there is something congenial to human nature, something agreeable to the tender feelings of affection, that those, "who in their "lives

" lives have been lovely, in their deaths " should not be divided."

But to return: our blessed Saviour, by a plain and familiar similitude, compares this office of preaching to the sowing of seed; which, in good husbandry, should have a soil well ordered and prepared to receive it, and to nourish it with all suitable supplies, till it come to a fruitful harvest, to which all is directed. The same course must be taken with this seed of the word, which we sow among you, if you mean to reap the fruit and benefit of it at the last great harvest. If ye do not attend our preaching, it is not in our power to sow good seed at all. And if ye do not also carefully attend to it, it will not be in our power to sow it to any good purpose: for what thus falls by the way-side upon careless and inattentive hearers, the devil, like a ravenous bird of prey, will soon snatch away and devour. And what falls upon stony places, upon hard and flinty hearts, will by no means endure the hot and scorching beams of tribulation and persecution,

but

but for want of sufficient root and nourishment will soon decline and wither away. The thorny cares also of this world, and the deceitfulness of the riches and pleasures of it, will spring up and choke the seed of the word that falls among them, and render it unfruitful. And that, and that only, which falls on the good ground of an honest and good heart, where is care to understand, faith to believe, a will to obey, and love to retain it, will thrive and flourish, and bring forth fruit unto eternal life.

And that it may the better thus thrive with you all, and bring forth fruit, some an hundred fold, some sixty, and some thirty, let me recommend it to you, when you would hear a sermon with a design to profit by it, to attend sincerely and fervently to all the prayers of the church that go before and accompany it. Begin thus with God and end with him; which will both put your hearts into a fit temper for profiting by the instructions given you, and so will leave them. By this means you will be able to imprint what you

you hear upon your memories, and apply it in your practice; which is the great end of our preaching: For vain is our preaching, and vain also is your hearing, if it bring not forth the fruits of good living.

But whether ye will hear, or whether ye will forbear, remember this, that there is a God in heaven, to whom ye are accountable for every opportunity of improvement, as well as we for every opportunity of improving you. Soon must you and I stand together at his all righteous tribunal: And at that awful hour, may both of us be able to give such an account of the talents committed to our charge, that ye may receive the fruit of your labours, and we may have the unspeakable comfort of having both saved ourselves and them that hear us!

SERMON LXVIII.

1 JOHN iii. 17.

But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the God in him?

AMIDST the various attacks which have been made upon Christianity since its first promulgation in the world, there is one part of it which has always escaped "the arrows and firebrands" of its enemies: no one has yet been hardy enough to call in question the benevolence of its principles; no one has yet dared to deny that its Divine Author continually "went about doing good," and that the direct tendency of all its doctrines

trines is to promote "peace on earth, "good will towards men." However, therefore, men of the best intentions may be led, from different views and conceptions of things, to differ in opinion about points of faith or modes of worship, they must all agree in approving and applauding that amiable spirit of philanthropy on which the gospel is founded, and every friend to mankind must be a friend to the generous and affectionate principles which it inculcates.

Accordingly we find, that in the first and purest ages of the church of Christ, his disciples were so distinguished from the rest of the world by the uninterrupted harmony and affection which prevailed amongst them, and by their kindness to the poor and distressed, as to extort even from the mouth of prejudiced heathenism that reluctant, but undeniable, testimony of their superior benevolence—See, how these Christians love one another!

Should the same spirit of harmony no longer prevail in the world; should the

various sects and parties into which the Christian church is now divided, and that bitterness and animosity which too often subsist among them, excite in us a sad and very contrary reflection; let us drop a tear of compassion over the weakness of human nature, which, by blending its own perverse passions with the pure doctrines of the gospel, has inverted the prophetic description of the kingdom of the Messiah, and turned the ploughshares and pruning-hooks of peace into the swords and spears of war and contention.

But whilst we deplore, and sure I am that every sincere Christian will join in deploring, that our "Jerusalem is no "longer at unity in itself," let us not be insensible to the blessings we enjoy from that charitable regard to our fellow-creatures, which still continues to breathe the genuine spirit of the gospel, and is ever ready, with healing in its wings, to alleviate every species of human distress. Nor will it be deemed, I hope, the language of flattery, or of a contracted national

tional partiality, to say, that, in this respect, we may justly challenge a distinguished pre-eminence to our own age and country; which, by the many and recent charitable institutions established in almost every part of the kingdom, have exhibited the most illustrious examples of humanity and Christian benevolence. And happy is it for us, amidst the dark cloud of horror which surrounds us on every side*, that we are able to derive one ray of consolation from the great abounding of these virtues; that we can presume humbly to hope that our attention to the cries of our distressed brethren may gain us a longer space for repentance, by staying back the hand of an offended God from such a nation as this, which is, in all other respects, so ripe for divine vengeance.

It is therefore with an honest confidence, and with cheerful forebodings of success, that the Preacher addresses himself to his audience upon occasions like

* At the close of the American war.

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the present; when he knows that the far greater part of it are zealously disposed to promote the good work which it is his province to recommend; and when he cannot suppose that there is even one person present, who is an enemy, nay, who is not a friend, to that cause of the widow and the fatherless, for which he stands here this day a willing, though imperfect, advocate.

Convinced, therefore, of your spontaneous good-will and propension to this labour of love, I shall pass over many arguments, addressed to the hopes and fears of mankind, which might be used on this occasion, and confine myself principally to the consideration of that more noble and ingenuous argument suggested in the words of the text, that charity to the poor is a necessary consequence of the love of God: "Whoso hath this "world's good, and seeth his brother "have need, and shutteth up his bowels "of compassion from him, how dwelleth "the love of God in him?"

That we should love the Lord our God with all our hearts and with all our souls, is a truth which no man can either deny or be ignorant of, who acknowledges his existence. For, when we acknowledge God as our Creator, we virtually acknowledge that all we are or have, all we enjoy or hope for, is owing to the free and unmerited bounty of this infinite and all-gracious Being; the clear consequence of which must be, that every possible return of gratitude and affection is due from us to this our kindest friend and greatest benefactor. The duty, therefore, of loving God can admit of no doubt. The only question upon this point can be, in what mode we shall best express that love? For, as holy Job said of old, "How can "man be profitable unto God?" Or how is it possible that he should receive any thing at our hands, who is in himself completely happy and for ever blessed?

The first and most natural idea which presents itself to a mind solicitous to express its love to God, is that of earnestly endeavouring to be like him. For it is

clear

a clear consequence of our loving God, that we should be desirous of pleasing him. And what can be more pleasing to him than to see us, as far as mortal infirmity will allow, treading in his divine steps, and aspiring to resemble him in all that mercy and loving-kindness, which he is continually exercising towards all his creatures? How grateful must it be to him to see us engaged in the same employment which constitutes his own supreme delight, in going about doing good, in dealing out our bread to the hungry, in visiting and comforting the poor and needy, the widow and the fatherless, and him that hath none to help him? This is indeed to be a God unto our brethren, by being merciful to them, even as our Father, who is in heaven, is merciful unto us and to all men.

And, on the contrary, how vile must he appear in the sight of God, who, having this world's good, seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him? For farther asunder are not heaven and hell, than all cruelty

and hard-heartedness is distant from the nature of the Almighty. Indeed, goodness and benevolence are such distinguishing properties of him, that St. John resolves all his other perfections into these, and in one word thus defines the Deity: "God is love." He therefore that loveth not his brother, as he certainly does not, who refuses to relieve him in his distress, according to the reasoning of the same Apostle, neither dwelleth in God, nor God in him; neither knoweth God, nor is known of him; and, according to the whole tenor of the gospel, hath no title to call God his father, but is indeed a very child of the devil.

Another way, by which we may shew our love of God, is by cheerfully obeying him; and particularly by doing those things which he has declared that he will look upon as so many requitals of his love to us. "If any man love me, says our "blessed Lord, he will keep my words." And what is said of a particular commandment, may with greater reason be said of all: for whosoever saith that he loveth

loveth God, and yet keepeth not his commandments, is a liar: inasmuch as his professions and his actions are directly repugnant to each other.

Now there is no one duty which God hath more frequently, or more strictly, required of us, than that of charity to the poor. And, to add energy to his commands, the manner in which we have discharged this duty is stated as a principal article of inquiry in the future process of the last judgment. He, therefore, who refuses to perform any act of kindness to a distressed brother, when it is in the power of his hand to do it, does thereby virtually declare that he has no sincere love or regard for his great Lord and Master, nor any real desire to please him; nay, rather that he is resolved to offend him; that he sets at nought his authority, and bids defiance to his vindictive power.

But farther: God has not only thus commanded us to shew mercy to the poor, but has also been pleased to declare, that he will look upon all our acts of kindness

as done unto himself, and will accordingly be answerable for them to us. Thus it is said, "He that hath pity on the poor, "lendeth unto the Lord." And again, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one "of the least of these my brethren, ye "have done it unto me." And what higher motive can be either proposed or conceived than this, that by every act of mercy to the poor we make the most high God our debtor; that the smallest favour we bestow on a distressed brother is recorded in heaven, and is accepted as done to Christ himself, our most gracious Redeemer?

What an inexpressible satisfaction then must it give to every man of a generous and grateful disposition, when he reflects that God, by making the poor his representatives, has given him an opportunity of rendering something to the Lord for all his benefits, and of discharging part of that immense debt of gratitude, which he owes to the Almighty? When he reflects, that though the return he makes to God's mercy be only as a drop of water to the ocean,

ocean, yet it is all which he can return, and all which God requires of him? This is a consideration, which should cause our hearts to burn within us, and make us ever eager to grasp the out-stretched hand of necessity, which implores our relief by that most cogent of all arguments, the love of God. It is a consideration, likewise, which, after we have performed any office of humanity, will afford such a pleasure and satisfaction to our minds, as all the world and its enjoyments cannot give us; arising from the testimony of our conscience, that the love of God does indeed dwell in us, the most rational, the most exalted, the most delightful passion, which can possess the mind of man.

What a wretch then must he be; what a base and sordid soul must he have, who cannot be roused into compassion by such alarming, such all-persuading motives? How insensible must he be of all the mercies of that God who made and preserves him, and of the inestimable love of that Jesus, who expired on the cross

to save him? By shutting up his bowels of compassion from the poor, he shews himself to be unworthy even of the name of a man; and therefore let him not debase the honour of that religion, whose characteristic distinction is tenderness, benignity, and universal love, by presuming to call himself a Christian; for assuredly he will not be acknowledged as such at the great day of account, when the language of the great Author of that religion to the cruel and unmerciful will certainly be, "Depart from me, I know you not."

Since then our love of God cannot be evidenced but by opening our bowels of compassion towards our distressed brother, a true Christian can have no doubt as to the necessity of his discharging this duty; his only difficulty will be how to apportion his abundance in the fittest manner to the various objects of compassion, which will solicit his attention in a world of change, and chance, and sorrow. And surely it will be no presumption in the Preacher, on the present occasion to tell him, that the godlike institution, which

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is the object of the present assembly, will ever have a strong and indisputable claim to no inconsiderable share of his benevolence.

The widow and the orphan have always been looked upon, both by God and man, as standing foremost among the miserable, and having the first title to our relief; both as the loss which they have sustained is in itself most afflicting, and also, as they are the least able to struggle with it; the one, through the natural tenderness and weakness of her sex; and the other, through the helpless imbecility of immature age. But the widows and orphans of poor Clergymen are distinguished from all others by the peculiar circumstances of distress with which their case is attended, and by the particular recommendations which they bring with them to our favour and regard: so that if we shut up our bowels of compassion from them, we may assure ourselves, in the fullest manner, that the love of God dwelleth not in us.

And here need I use any art in painting to you a scene, which many of you must have beheld with your own eyes, and more of you must have heard frequently represented to you, on these occasions, in the most lively colours; even that scene of distress and desolation, of distraction and despair, which immediately takes place in the family on the death of a poor Clergyman? The many necessary charges and incumbrances to which he is subject, which make a difference, too little considered, between his nominal and real income; the decency of figure which he is obliged to support in the world, if he would avoid contempt; the charity and hospitality which he must maintain, if he would be esteemed by his flock, or be capable of having due weight with them in his ministry, have so entirely exhausted the whole of his scanty income, perhaps enjoyed but for a short time, after many tedious years of anxious expectation, that it has been impossible for him to make any provision against the fatal day of separation: so that when it comes, it finds his wretched family utterly destitute, not

only of any present support, but also of the very means and hopes of future subsistence. "Poverty cometh upon them "like a traveller with a quick and con- "tinued motion, and want as an armed "man, that is neither to be avoided nor "resisted."

The loss of a kind husband and tender parent must always, to a mind of any sensibility, be abundantly afflictive and very grievous to be borne. But, when this is attended with the loss of all the other comforts of life, the weight of each of these afflictions more than doubles that of the other, and the combined burden of both of them together becomes, I had almost said—insupportable. Surely then such an accumulated load of misery and distress must justly entitle the poor sufferers to the most generous fruits of our compassion; and they will as certainly receive them from us, if the love of God does indeed dwell in us: for then we shall be desirous of imitating, pleasing, and obeying him: then we shall gladly lay hold of the opportunity which is now offered

offered to us of shewing our gratitude to him, in the way and manner which he himself has appointed, and therefore most acceptable to him.

The argument then will rise high in the breast of every Christian, in favour of the children of affliction, who are the objects of this charity, if we consider them in no other light than as partakers of the same nature with ourselves, having the same wants and feelings, being servants of the same God, and redeemed by the same most precious blood of Christ.

But, if we farther take into the account, that the husbands and fathers of these persons were men who lived and died in the immediate service of God, and that the distress in which they have left their families, arises from their having dedicated themselves to this service in preference to any of the more lucrative employments in life: who, that has any love of God, or the least spark of zeal for the honour of his worship, can hold back his hand, or turn away his face from this

double

double sacrifice of piety and charity? Shall we receive such inestimable benefits by the ministry of this venerable order of men, and shall we shew no pity, nor make the smallest return to their dearest remains? Shall we, by their hands, partake of the bread of life, and shall we refuse to those, who were once the desire of their eyes, and the joy and pride of their hearts, even the crumbs which fall from our tables, of the bread that perisheth?

But indeed, even setting aside these peculiar circumstances, there is no man, who is a friend to common morality, or a sincere well-wisher to the happiness of mankind, who has not an interest in promoting the charity of the present day. For even those, who have the least regard for religion itself, will readily acknowledge that the principles of good order and decency, especially among the lower ranks of the people, cannot well be maintained in society, without such an order of men as the clergy. If therefore the love of God can be supposed to have no influence in the breast of any man, yet the love of

his

his country, which was never wanting in the breast of any good man, and which, in fact, includes the love of himself, should induce him heartily to concur in every design for the support and encouragement of the sacred order. And how shall this be done but by holding forth to their view the comfortable prospect that, when they fall, their name and memorial shall not perish with them, but that a grateful and generous public will cheerfully adopt the language of God himself: "Leave thy fatherless children; I will "preserve them alive: and let thy widows "trust in me." Such was the practice of the wisest nation of antiquity; such is the practice of our own nation, towards the widows and orphans of those, who have fought her battles and died in her service. And surely the widows and orphans of the clergy are not less deserving of her regard and support. The husbands and parents of both were engaged, though in different ways, in the same glorious cause, in maintaining and securing the happiness and welfare of their country; the one, in defending it against its foreign enemies,

enemies, the other, in preserving its interior peace and prosperity, by preaching and promoting universal truth and righteousness, unity and brotherly love.

A lover of Christianity must be a still warmer friend to the present institution; because it is a work of charity, the distinguishing and favourite virtue of the Gospel; and especially, because it is a work of charity to those, who have the strongest claims to our most grateful and liberal regards, by being in a more particular manner of the houshold of faith; such as were once dearest to, and are now all that remains of those, who were the ministers and ambassadors of Christ, the stewards and dispensers of the mysteries of God. And sure I am, that every true Protestant will find a peculiar pleasure, by paying this tribute of affection to the memory of the "ministers by "whom he believed," in asserting the natural rights and Gospel-liberty of the clergy, against papal tyranny and usurpation, which have impudently dared to declare marriage unlawful in one order of men,

men, which St. Paul has pronounced to be honorable among all men, without exception or distinction.

And though the duty I am now recommending to you is of all the most reasonable, the most delightful, and carries its own reward along with it, yet it is, at the same time, one of the most easy to be practised. For here is no cutting off a right hand, or plucking out an eye: Here is no rigid mortification, or austere self-denial, required. Ye are not commanded to sell all that ye have, and give it to the poor. We only solicit for the crumbs which fall from your tables, the overflowings of your abundance, which can never be felt or regretted by yourselves. Do not then suffer thyself to be bribed by such a paltry consideration to violate one of the most sacred laws of humanity. Refuse not thy gracious God, for the sake of such vile trash, a sacrifice so well-pleasing in his sight. Defraud not thyself of such a boundless fund of happiness for so poor a trifle. In a word, be

at the same time merciful to thy brother, and true and just to thy own soul.

Indeed, if we rightly consider the matter as we ought, we shall find that every one of us, who hath this world's good, is much more interested in the charitable work of this day, than even the unfortunate persons who are the immediate objects of it. For, if we sordidly shut up our bowels of compassion from them, the only effect of it upon them will be, that they will sink the sooner under the pressure of their affliction, and so the sooner be delivered out of all their troubles; whilst their patience will entitle them to the greater happiness hereafter. But we, who cruelly suffer them to fall a prey to distress and dereliction, shall lose both the present and the future blessings, which God has annexed to the practice of mercy and loving-kindness. For, as a venerable father of the church well argues *, Why did the just and merciful God make so unequal a division of the

* St. Basil.

good things of this life? Why did he make one man rich and another poor, but that the one might be rewarded for his charity, and the other for his patience? And a greater than St. Basil hath told us, that it is far "more blessed to give than to re-"ceive." So that it is no solecism to affirm, that loving others is loving ourselves, and that a man should be charitable to the poor even from a regard for himself.

But, though in this, as well as in other instances of our duty, we are allowed, and even encouraged, to have our own true happiness in view, yet must not this be the only, nor the leading principle of our benevolence. For, besides a tender concern for our distressed brother, and a view to the consequences which will result to ourselves from "the blessing of him "that was ready to perish;" we must, before and above all other considerations, be moved and directed by the love of God. A sincere desire to serve and please him, and the warmest gratitude for all his mercies, must excite, pervade and animate every kind intention to our fellow-

fellow-creatures. We must look upon every act of charity as a sacrifice of love and obedience, of praise and thanksgiving to that God, to whom we owe all our blessings and comforts, even that valuable blessing, which we this day enjoy, of being enabled, by the condition in which he has placed us, to afford relief to others, instead of lying under the sad necessity of asking it for ourselves.

If then your bowels of compassion be not entirely shut up, and there be any feeling in your hearts; if you have any relish for pleasures of the most exalted kind, or any sense of your own true interest; if there be any ingenuousness in your disposition, or the smallest spark of gratitude in your souls; you will not, you cannot turn away your faces from the fatherless and the widow, who are recommended to your charity by every motive of pity, goodness and generosity; by the extremity of their distress, and the endearing relation they bear to you, by the genuine dictates of your own breasts, by the honour of your church and nation, by

the nature and spirit of your holy religion; and, above all, by the pressing solicitation of your best friends; the God who made and feeds you, and the Lord who died on the cross to save you.

Suffer me therefore, finally, in the name and behalf of every distressed widow and fatherless child for whom I am now pleading, to address you in the tender and affecting language of holy Job: "Have "pity on me, have pity on me, O ye my "friends: for the hand of God hath "touched me*." And may the same almighty hand so touch your souls with a just sense of their misery and your own duty, that ye may offer unto God willingly, in the uprightness of your hearts, by ministering liberally to their great and crying necessities!

* Job xix. 21.

SER-

SERMON LXIX.

MATTHEW xii. 31.

But the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men *.

THE severity of the sentence here pronounced has been the unhappy occasion of much distress and difficulty to persons of timid or ill-informed understandings; who, whilst they have laboured under the horrors of a mind conscious of having deserved the divine displeasure, have but too readily persuaded themselves, at the same time, that they have been

* Whitby refers these words to the future dispensation of the Holy Ghost: but, I think, his interpretation is not easily reconcileable with the account given in Mark iii. 30.

guilty of that dreadful and atrocious crime, here mentioned, which " shall " not be forgiven, neither in this world, " neither in the world to come." I hope, therefore, that an attempt to set this crime in a clear and intelligible light, (for the benefit of my less instructed hearers) will be received with candour, though it should neither come recommended with the graces of diction, which would ill accord with a subject of this nature, nor convey, perhaps, any new discovery to those, who want not the means of better information. I mean not, however, to enter into that mass of controversy, which has unhappily been accumulated on this subject, or to develope the several mysterious interpretations, which have been given of the words of the text. We are happy enough to see the time, when religion is equally divested of those meretricious ornaments and unintelligible subtleties which belong not to it; and when the plain and undisguised truth, as it is in Jesus, wants neither the glare of false embellishments to recommend, nor the sophistry and jargon of the schools to support

port and defend it. I shall therefore content myself with explaining the nature of the sin against the Holy Ghost, as it is clearly to be collected from considering the occasion on which the words of the text were spoken, and also some collateral passages of Scripture, which relate to this sin.

1st. Then, the occasion of the words was this:

The Pharisees, having seen our Saviour perform a great number of miracles, and, in particular, heal one possessed with a devil, blind and dumb; directly accused him of casting out devils by Beelzebub, the prince of devils.

From this imputation our Saviour clears himself, by telling them, that it was absurd to suppose, that he derived the power of casting out devils from the prince of devils; since, in that case, Satan would be divided against himself, and therefore his kingdom could not stand.

He then proceeds to shew their malice in ascribing his power of casting out devils to Beelzebub, whilst, at the same time, they ascribed that power to God, by which some among themselves pretended to perform the same miracle: "If "I," says he, "by Beelzebub cast out "devils, by whom do your children cast "them out?" As if he had said; What cause have you to be so prejudiced against me, when you act in a different manner towards others, who claim the same power? For if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, then must your children, that is, your disciples or countrymen, cast them out by Beelzebub too: "Therefore," says he, "shall they be your judges."

He then shews, that he is so far from acting under the influence or by the power of Beelzebub, that his casting out devils plainly implies, that he possessed a power far superior to that of Beelzebub: For "How," says he, "can one enter "into a strong man's house and spoil his "goods, except he first bind the strong "man; and then he will spoil his goods:"

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that is, in other words, nothing less than a divine power, superior to that of Beelzebub, could enable me to perform these miracles, by which I pull down the strong holds of Satan, and dispossess him of those habitations, which God, for wise reasons, has, for a time, permitted him to occupy.

He then concludes with this proverbial sentence: "He that is not with me, is "against me; and he that gathereth not "with me, scattereth:" that is, we justly look upon those as enemies, who, though they do not openly declare against us, yet do not take our part, or shew a willingness to assist and protect us: therefore much more I, who am so far from favouring his cause, that I openly declare against and make war upon the kingdom of Satan, must undoubtedly be considered as his clear and determined enemy.

Having thus shewn the folly and malice of the Pharisees in ascribing his power of working miracles to a diabolical agency, he then pronounces the heavy sentence of con-

condemnation contained in the words of the text: "All manner of sin and blas-
" phemy shall be forgiven unto men;
" but the blasphemy against the Holy
" Ghost shall not be forgiven."

It is plain therefore, from a review of the whole circumstances, that the sin of the Pharisees, against which our Saviour pronounced this severe anathema, consisted in this: That when they had sufficient evidence to convince them, that the miracles he wrought were performed by the finger of God, they wilfully and maliciously persevered in ascribing them to the power of the devil.

This will appear still clearer, if we consider the manner, in which St. Mark relates the same fact: " Verily," says he,
" I say unto you, all sins shall be for-
" given unto the sons of men, and blas-
" phemies wherewithsoever they shall
" blaspheme: but he that shall blas-
" pheme against the Holy Ghost hath
" never forgiveness, but is in danger of
" eternal damnation:" And he then immediately

mediately adds, that Jesus spake this, "because they said, he hath an unclean "spirit." Now, as our Saviour's miracles were the most authentic proof that could be given of his being sent from God, and that his doctrine was divine; and as the crime of the Pharisees consisted in ascribing his miracles to the devil, because they would not believe his doctrine, nor own him for the Messias; we may therefore conclude, that the leading and principal part of the sin against the Holy Ghost consists in rejecting a religion, as false and founded on diabolical agency and imposture, which comes to us recommended and confirmed by strong and authentic proofs of a divine original.

But, in order to give you a clearer and more distinct idea of this sin, I shall examine what is said of it, in two places of the epistle to the Hebrews, which are generally understood to have relation to this point.

The first is in the 6th chapter, where the Apostle expresses himself in these terms:

terms: "It is impossible for those, who "were once enlightened, and have tasted "of the heavenly gift, and were made "partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have "tasted the good word of God, and the "powers of the world to come, if they "shall fall away, to renew them again "unto repentance; seeing they crucify to "themselves the Son of God afresh, and "put him to an open shame." The sense of which words I apprehend to be this: it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, that is, who have come to a true knowledge of the Christian faith and the doctrine of the gospel; and have tasted of the heavenly gift, that is, who have been sensible of the sweet effects of those promises of grace which are made to repenting sinners under the gospel dispensation; and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, either of its inward effects upon their own minds, or of its outward agency in producing miraculous operations for the conversion of unbelievers; and lastly, who have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, that is, who have known

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the gospel to be more excellent than the law, and have been acquainted with the powers and wonders of the first age of the church, which was to succeed the dispensation of Moses, and is therefore called μέλλων αἰὼν, the world, or more properly, the age, to come. It is impossible, says the Apostle, that they, who have enjoyed all these privileges, if they fall away and apostatize, should ever be renewed again unto repentance.

The other passage of St. Paul is in the tenth chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, where he says, "If we sin wilfully, "after that we have received the know-"ledge of the truth, there remaineth no "more sacrifice for sins, but a certain "fearful looking for of judgment and "fiery indignation, which shall devour "the adversaries." From which words we may clearly draw these two consequences: first, that they who, after they have embraced Christianity, and made a public profession of its doctrine, afterwards entirely renounce it by a total apostacy, with a deliberate mind, wilfully and against

against the dictates of their conscience, are not to expect that a sin of so deep a dye will ever be pardoned; for it is unpardonable; and therefore the Apostle says, there remains only a certain fearful looking for of judgment: it is such as the High-priest of old was not allowed to expiate by sacrifice; and therefore he adds, "there remaineth no more sacrifice "for sins."

The second consequence deducible from the words of St. Paul is, that they, who, after they have known the gospel, and even at the very time they are making a profession of Christianity, fall into an universal corruption of manners, and give themselves to all kinds of wickedness, deliberately and with a full consent of their will, and without remorse, have no reason to hope for pardon; and that the sacrifice of Christ upon the cross, which is the only means by which they could obtain it, will be of no benefit to them, because they wilfully reject and despise it.

I think

I think it necessary to take notice of one more passage, in the First Epistle of St. John, which seems to have a near affinity to those already quoted; it is this: "There is a sin unto death; I do not say "that he shall pray for it." What this sin unto death is, St. John hath not particularly mentioned. Some therefore have imagined, that he meant those crying sins of idolatry, murder, and adultery, which debarred obstinate and incorrigible offenders in them finally from the communion of the church, and were therefore called mortal sins, or sins unto death. But I rather incline to the opinion of the learned Beza, who imagines the sin unto death to mean a total apostacy from the Christian faith, joined perhaps with a malicious blaspheming against the Holy Ghost, as in the case of the Pharisees. And it is the more probable that St. John speaks of this, because we know that many of the Jews at that time were guilty of this very crime, by renouncing the faith they had once embraced, and relapsing into Judaism. However, in either sense, this passage will fall in with the propo-

sition before laid down, that they are guilty of sin not to be forgiven, who are either obstinate apostates, or remain hardened, deliberate, and incorrigible offenders in great and crying sins.

From what has been said it appears, that there are three sorts of sin against the Holy Ghost; or, to speak more accurately, three different ways of committing the same sin; which, having all the same object, may not improperly be called, though in very different degrees, the sin against the Holy Ghost.

The first and principal one is, by maliciously opposing a religion, which is built upon the strongest and most convincing proof, and supported by such miracles as we cannot disprove, and therefore chuse rather to ascribe to the devil, than own the author of them to be sent from God, and embrace his doctrine; which was the sin of the Pharisees alluded to in the text, but cannot now be committed since the cessation of working miracles.

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The second is, when men entirely renounce Christ and his doctrine wilfully and with a deliberate mind, out of pure malice and hatred, without being forced to it either through weakness or fear, against the conviction of their own conscience, not only after they have known the truth, but also after they have publicly professed it, and afterwards even add persecution to their apostasy. This is that species of sin, which the Apostle St. Paul chiefly had in view in those two passages which I have already quoted, and which, as I have before observed, was but too common in the early ages of Christianity.

The third way of committing sin against the Holy Ghost is, when men fall into an universal corruption of manners, and give themselves up to every species of wickedness, though at the same time they make a profession of Christianity; but yet, having cast off all fear of God, trample religion under their feet, and do despite to the spirit of grace. These are probably they, of whom St. Peter says,

"They speak evil of things they under-
"stand not, and therefore shall utterly
"perish in their own corruption;" and of whom St. Jude says, "There are certain
"men crept in unawares, who were be-
"fore of old ordained to this condemna-
"tion; ungodly men, turning the grace
"of God into lasciviousness, and denying
"the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus
"Christ."

Having now pointed out from some plain texts of scripture in what the sin against the Holy Ghost consists, I shall detain you no longer at present on the subject than whilst I briefly explain why it is called blasphemy; and particularly blasphemy against the Holy Ghost.

Now it is called blasphemy, because they who commit any species of this sin clearly incur that guilt, which is denoted by the word blasphemy: for blasphemy, in its proper and strict sense, is a sort of calumny or detraction, by which we ascribe to God and his word such things as are injurious to and unworthy of him, or

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by which we depreciate or undervalue his divine perfections; by which we not only deny God, but also insult and mock him. Thus, if we consider the manner in which the sin against the Holy Ghost was committed by the Pharisees, it will appear to be a most plain and horrid blasphemy. For what can be a greater act of blasphemy than to ascribe to the devil that which is the effect of an almighty power?

If again we consider it as a renunciation of the truth of the gospel, accompanied with such circumstances as I have already mentioned, is it not the height of blasphemy to renounce a doctrine, which we have once acknowledged as divine, to traduce it as false and fictitious, and to reject and condemn it, notwithstanding it bears the evident marks of truth and divinity? What is this but to speak evil of the Deity; since every slander and affront we cast upon his word and doctrine strikes at the divine authority, and reaches the throne and person of God himself. If again, we believe a religion to be divine, and yet trample it under our

feet by a total depravation of morals, we are no less guilty of blasphemy: for this is surely as much as to despise and undervalue it as if we thought it false, and wished it to be regarded as such by those who are witnesses of our actions; and it would clearly be more ingenuous at once to renounce it, than to acknowledge the truth of its precepts with our tongues, whilst we flagitiously violate and blaspheme them in our actions.

Lastly, this sin is not only called blasphemy, but particularly blasphemy against the Holy Ghost. Not that this sin is more offensive to the Holy Ghost than to the other sacred persons of the Trinity; but because it more immediately acts in contradiction to the peculiar operations of the Holy Spirit, whose property it is to enlighten us; since it either extinguishes, or renders useless, that light of truth, which the Holy Ghost kindles in the heart of every true believer.

And in this way every man clearly acts against the operations of the Holy Ghost, who

who opposes a religion, of the truth of which he cannot doubt; or, again, when he forsakes and persecutes a religion, of whose divine origin he is fully convinced; or lastly, when he tramples it under foot by a total and wilful depravation of morals: since in all these cases he obstructs the powers of the Holy Ghost, he quenches the spirit of God, and tacitly accuses him of falshood and imposture.

How far those novel teachers are guilty of this crime, who deny both the divinity of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, and who have established separate congregations for inculcating these impious notions, I will not take upon me to determine; since it is impossible for man to say on what motives or grounds of conviction they may act. But sure I am of this, that it well behoves them to be very clear on what ground they stand in a matter of so great importance; the penalties of which extend, not only to the present short life, but to all eternity. For the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall never be forgiven, neither in this

world, nor in that which is to come: and of this solemn truth we are assured, there are three that bear record in Heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost.

May we all sincerely weigh and consider the great evidences of our holy religion, so as to produce a thorough conviction of its truth in our minds; and may this conviction operate so forcibly upon our conduct, as to produce in us holy and virtuous lives. We shall then have no anxious fears about the commission of that heavy sin, which is incapable of forgiveness, both in this world and also in that which is to come. If, in smaller things, human frailty should yield to the power of temptation, we shall renew our strength by prayer and repentance: we shall look up with confidence to the throne of mercy, and rest our hopes of forgiveness and acceptance on the all-sufficient merits of Christ; and having finished our course through this vale of tears, we shall aspire to the blessed mansions of that city above, whose builder and maker is God.

SER-

SERMON LXX.

1 Tim. vi. 17—19.

Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy;—that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate;—laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.

"GIVE me neither poverty nor riches," was the language of a wise petitioner, who well knew that both had their peculiar and dangerous temptations, and

therefore wished to avoid them, by being fed with the food that was convenient for him.

The temptations to which rich men are more particularly exposed, are high-mindedness and confidence in their riches. For, as the Scriptures tell us, "riches "and strength lift up the heart;" and again, "the rich man's wealth is his "strong city, and as a high wall in his "own conceit."

Against these therefore the Apostle exhorts Timothy, in the words of the text, to level all the powers of his eloquence and authority: "Charge them," says he, "who are rich in this world," that is, the rich and luxurious citizens of Ephesus, where Timothy then resided, "that they "be not high-minded, nor trust in un-"certain riches." And, to add the greater weight to his instructions, he points out the true source of this and every other blessing, and therefore the only fit object of our trust and confidence, that is, "the living God, who "giveth

" giveth us richly all things to enjoy." He then concludes his exhortation with explaining the proper uses, to which their riches ought to be applied; " that they " should do good, that they should be " rich in good works, ready to distribute, " willing to communicate;" not perhaps exactly according to the original sense of the word, when, in the infancy of Christianity, the disciples " had all things " common," but at least by communicating a share of their good things to the distressed, as every man had need; at the same time encouraging them to a faithful discharge of these great duties of charity and benevolence, by setting before them the noble rewards with which they will one day be attended: " laying " up in store for themselves a good foun- " dation against the time to come, that " they may lay hold on eternal life."

And indeed there cannot be a more effectual remedy against those corruptions, with which riches are apt to poison and infect the mind, than that generous and diffusive spirit of charity, which arises from

from a sense of our dependence upon the living God, who giveth us all things richly to enjoy.

For 1st. With regard to pride; which consists in entertaining too high an opinion of ourselves, and too low and contemptuous a one of others: What can be a greater check upon this foolish conceit of our own importance, than that mild and gentle temper of charity, which knowing itself dependent on the bounty of heaven, "vaunteth not itself, is not easily puffed up?" This will teach us a just estimate of ourselves and of others: it will teach us, that all men are formed by the same almighty hand, wear the same divine image, are all heirs of the same hopes; it will teach us that every man's situation in life is the appointment of divine Providence, and that no station therefore is contemptible; it will farther teach us, that the blessings of Heaven are distributed with so equal a hand, that even the lowest have some advantages, which the highest want; and that no man is without a sufficient share of them to guard

guard him from the finger of scorn and the derision of fools. And whilst we keep these ideas in view, we shall neither be disposed to think haughtily of ourselves, nor contemptuously of others; we shall be sensible, that "pride was not made "for man, nor lofty thoughts for him "that is born of a woman."

Nor 2dly, Will this spirit of charity, which arises from a sense of our own dependence upon the living God, be less serviceable in removing that false confidence, which men are ever too apt to place in their riches. For he, who is once taught by a spirit of benevolence the true nature and end of his riches; that they are only lent him by Providence for the benefit of the poor and necessitous; and that the same power which gave, can also take away; nay, that, as the royal Psalmist expresses it, riches often make themselves wings and fly away, and what is still worse, often fly from the generous and deserving to the most worthless and sordid of mankind: such a man will never be led to trust in uncertain

riches, but will rather place his hopes in the living God, from whom he received them, and to whom he stands accountable for the use he has made of them.

And therefore it is we find holy Job expressly declaring, that he thought himself bound to practise the duties of charity and humility, lest he should seem to deny the God, who was the absolute giver and disposer of all he enjoyed.

"If," says he, "I have withheld the "poor from their desire, or caused the "eyes of the widow to fail; if I have "eaten my morsel alone, and the father-"less hath not eaten thereof; if I have "seen any perish for want of cloathing, "or any poor without covering, and his "loins have not blessed me, and he were "not warmed with the fleece of my sheep; "if I have made gold my hope, or said "to the fine gold, thou art my confi-"dence; this were an iniquity to be pu-"nished by the judge; for I should have "denied, that God is above."

Such

Such is the remedy, which the Apostle points out against the vices of high-mindedness, and confidence in uncertain riches. And to make this remedy the more efficacious, he points out, 2dly, The particular duties, to which we are obliged by a spirit of charity and benevolence.

The first of these is to do good.

And here what a noble field is open for the display of our humanity, including no less than the whole race of human kind! The heathen thought it sufficient to return the obligations of gratitude, and to do good to those, from whom he had received good: And the narrow-minded Jew confined his acts of beneficence to those, who were of his own country and religion: and was therefore ever ready to cry out in the churlish language of Nabal, "Who is David, and "who is the son of Jesse? Shall I take "my bread and my water, and my flesh "that I have killed, and give it unto "men, whom I know not whence they "be?"

"be?" But the Christian is taught to act upon a more generous and enlarged plan: To him the partition-wall between Jew and Gentile is broken down: He is to do good, as opportunity offers, to all men, without distinction of age or country, friend or foe, sect or party: His example is to be fetched down from Heaven: He is to copy the universal benevolence of his Creator, who is good to all, and makes his sun to shine alike upon the just and the unjust: He is to follow the steps of his Redeemer, who died for his enemies, as well as for his friends. Whoever therefore labours under the common infirmities or calamities of human nature, be his condition, opinion, interest, country, or denomination, what it will; he is the Christian's friend, brother, and equal: He is the object of his compassion, of his prayers, his advice, his bounty, and his assistance.

2dly. As we are required to do good to all men, without distinction, so are we also required to do good at all times.

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It is painful to condemn even the faintest dawnings of so amiable a virtue as humanity, let them proceed from what cause they will: And happy it is for the distressed, that there are so many motives to lead men to the exercise of it: But the sacredness of truth compels me to say, that a partial, or irregular charity, is not the charity of the Gospel. We may be liberal in a pleasant humour; the feelings of pity and the importunity of distress, the dread of shame or the vanity of ostentation, may extort from us an accidental alms to a poor member of Christ: but such sudden and fortuitous starts of benevolence reach not the duty of the true Christian. He is not only to do good, sometimes and by chance, but, in the language of the text, he is to be "rich in good works:" His charity is to be a steady principle, operating at all times; not dazzling the eye with uncertain flashes, but irradiating and reviving the heart of the distressed with a steady and unremitting warmth. Every year therefore, every month, nay, every rising sun, will recall some such reflection as

this

this to his mind: The chearful beams of day now begin to shine forth upon the world, and recall to me those pleasing varieties of nature, which God hath every where scattered with an unsparing hand through the works of his creation. But, whilst to me they thus bring new life and pleasure, alas for thousands of my fellow-creatures! they shine forth, only to awake the children of affliction to a painful recollection of their various distresses; to recall the pang of sorrow, to throw an unwelcome light on the dungeon of the fettered captive, to make the wretchedness of the poor mansions of poverty, only more visible and conspicuous. These various evils, I well know, are necessary in the confused order of a world like this, where pain and sorrow are the native birth-right and lot of man. Yet Providence, by putting the means of doing it into my hands, has allotted to me the pleasing task of alleviating these miseries, and of administering to the necessities of my fellow-creatures. I will remember therefore that this rising sun recalls me to the discharge of this god-like task. I will

labour

labour to remove poverty and sickness from off the face of the earth, as far as my abilities extend, by scattering the beams of benevolence around me, so long as heaven permits me to be the steward of its blessings. And, though I cannot hope to wipe away all tears from all faces, for that belongeth to God alone, yet I may make the journey of some of my fellow-travellers through life happy; I may save a few perhaps from sinking under their heavy burdens; and be the happy instrument, under God, to save their souls alive hereafter, as well as to alleviate their bodily distresses here. At least of this I am fully assured, whatever may be the event of my endeavours, that I shall have discharged my own duty; that I shall have acted in conformity to the great dictates of nature and religion; and that therefore the prayers of the fatherless and widow will plead for me at the throne of mercy, in that great and awful day of account, when I shall most stand in need of mercy.

Thirdly, as the charity of the Christian must not be partial nor irregular, so neither must it be cold or grudging. It must not be extorted by argument or persuasion: it must not flow reluctantly or grudgingly, but freely and chearfully; it must arise from a love and obedience of God who commands it; from a regard to the poor, made in the image of God, who want it; from a respect to ourselves, who may one day stand in need of the bounty of others. Our charity therefore must not drop with the niggard reluctance of the miser, but flow with the unbounded liberality of heaven. The true Christian will be ready to distribute, willing to communicate: And instead of studying frivolous objections to colour over his want of charity, which is too often the case of narrow-minded wretches, whose minds are impervious to the warm beams of benevolence, he will lend a willing ear to the cries of the necessitous: He will search out the poor and needy: He will plead for the misery that cannot plead for itself: He will anticipate the wishes of modest want: He will have a pleasure in

sparing

sparing the confusion of depressed virtue, and rejoice to relieve the hand of falling worth, that cannot dig, and to beg is ashamed; knowing that God who loveth, will also reward the chearful giver.

And lastly, the charity of the true Christian will not only extend itself to the bodies, but also to the souls of men. And indeed, little as this is generally regarded, it is perhaps the noblest exercise of Christian benevolence. It is humane to feed the hungry, it is kind to clothe the naked, it is merciful to be feet to the lame and eyes to the blind, to deserve the blessing of the fatherless, and make the widow's heart to sing for joy: But how much nobler is it to restore the wandering sinner back to God and his duty, to snatch the profane infidel from the gates of hell, to awaken the impenitent, to comfort the broken-hearted mourner, to instruct the ignorant, to extend the glorious light of the Gospel to remote kingdoms, and open the gates of immortality to nations that now sit in darkness and the shadow of death? These are in-

deed glorious objects of charity; as much exceeding the relief of men's temporal distresses, as the soul is more noble than the body, as the years of eternity are of more importance than the span of life. He therefore who is filled with a true sense of the duty of benevolence, will never want employment for his wealth or his abilities, so long as there is one body made after the image of God to be clothed or fed; so long as there is one soul, for whom Christ died, to be comforted, reformed, or instructed.

Such are the duties of charity and benevolence recommended by the great Apostle of the Gentiles to those, whom Providence had blessed with affluence. And to add weight to this recommendation, he commands Timothy (3dly), To lay before them the noble reward, which would await their compassion extended to the poor members of Christ: "laying up in "store for themselves a good foundation "against the time to come, that they may "lay hold on eternal life." A reward indeed truly noble and desirable, sufficient

cient to animate the coldest, and make the weak strong! For what is it that is offered? Not the fading splendor of an earthly crown; not the unstable pomp of mortal greatness; not the transient raptures of human pleasure; not the existence of a few days, or months, or years: but it is the offer of a heavenly kingdom that cannot decay; it is the offer of immortal powers; it is the offer of unchangeable happiness; it is the offer of an eternal existence in the presence of God and his angels. And all this in return for that small pittance we bestow out of our abundance upon the sons and daughters of affliction, in obedience to God's command, and from a heart animated with the enlivening beams of Christian faith and benevolence. Such an offer, if rightly weighed, is sufficient to make us run with eagerness the race that is set before us, to make us grasp with joy the out-stretched hand of indigence, and contend who shall be foremost in discharging the duties of humanity, to which these great things are promised.

To do good, therefore, and to communicate, let us not forget; knowing that with such sacrifices God is well pleased, and will not forget our work and labour of love.

And surely I may without injustice say, that there never can be a fairer opportunity of discharging the duty of benevolence than in the support of that amiable and charitable institution, for which I now stand a willing, though unable, advocate. For what branch is there of this duty which we may not, nay must not, exercise, in contributing to the maintenance and instruction of these poor innocents now before us?

Is it a principle of this duty to do good to all men freely and without distinction of persons, or partiality of affections? Here we may do it in the most perfect manner, and in the highest degree. For, in selecting and maintaining these poor objects, there is no distinction made of friend or foe, of sect or party. They stand not here imploring your benevolence,

lence, as being the children of those from whom ye have received past, or expect future favours; their true recommendation is, that they are the children of God and the children of affliction. Your benevolence is therefore free, generous, and disinterested; is agreeable to that noble precept of the gospel, which commands us "to do good unto all men, hoping for "nothing again."

Are we again commanded to be rich in good works, and to diffuse the beams of charity on all around us? This kind institution will never fail to supply us with the means and opportunities of doing it. For so long as sin and calamity continue to make their ravages in this wide extended world, so long objects of our charity will never be wanting, adequate to the most enlarged and diffusive benevolence. Indeed every day and hour is adding to the number of them; and we need but look around us to see thousands, who, from those various changes and chances of life to which every man is exposed, stand in need of that protection

and assistance, which is here given to the miseries of unsheltered youth and innocence. Here the fatal stroke of death leaves a wretched mother, destitute of her only support, to struggle with sorrow and distress. There the profligate extravagance of a thoughtless parent exposes a group of deserted infants to all the horrors of famine and nakedness. Here the gripe of oppression seizes upon the last morsel of an industrious pair;—there the honest labourer, enfeebled by sickness, impoverished by want of employment, or undone by the increasing dearness of all the necessaries of life, stands in silent anguish, surrounded by the cries of a famished brood of children, for which his hands are willing, but alas are unable, to procure bread. Here the robber, that walketh in darkness, spoils the labour of the industrious trader, and cruelly strips him of his little all;—there the fire, that destroyeth at noon-day, dashes down the fond hopes of industry in an unlooked-for moment, and leaves a distracted parent without children, or unfriended children without bread, to the wide, and too often unfeeling

unfeeling, world. This is but a faint sketch of the thousand miseries which are strewed in the road of human life; but so long as thousands are exposed to these, and numberless other accidents, the most benevolent will never want opportunities of being rich in good works, by extending their liberality to fatherless or unsupported children.

Is our charity again to be extended to the souls as well as bodies of men? And where shall we find a better opportunity of discharging this branch of humanity?

I believe no man will scruple to say, that it is much to be wished that all the children, who are here clothed and instructed, could also be wholly supported and confined to useful labour, under the direction of their benevolent Governors. But though this will probably ever be more in our hearts to wish, than within the reach of our ability to attain; yet we may safely affirm, that it is even now no inconsiderable advantage, that they are all, in part at least, removed from the jaws

jaws of idleness and the contagion of evil examples. They have, farther, a sense of decency and subjection imprinted early on their minds, to guard them from evil. They have an awful impression of God and religion instilled into them, to lead them to what is good. They are habituated to a constant attendance upon the ordinances of the church, and a serious regard to God's appointed day of rest. They are made acquainted with the book of life; they have its examples, its precepts, its promises, its threatenings, to guide and warn them amidst the temptations and snares of the world. And lastly, they have their duty to God and man explained and enforced to them in the excellent words of our Church-catechism, to the constant and serious repetition of which they are duly called at stated seasons.

These things, my brethren, as far at least as human foresight and endeavours can do it, must contribute to make them good men and good Christians. And therefore, if the grace of God be not wholly wanting

wanting in them, you may have the comfortable assurance, that, whilst you are providing for the perishable bodies of these distressed innocents, you are at the same time taking care for their immortal souls; that you are forwarding that great work of salvation, for which Christ came into the world, and adding to the number of those, who will one day shine as the stars in the firmament for ever and ever.

Here then let your readiness to distribute, your willingness to communicate, appear. Remember, that life is short, and the opportunities of doing good uncertain. Remember, that the light of benevolence, which might have shone to-day, may be dim to-morrow. Remember, that the poor wretch, whose fainting soul a cup of cold water might have cheered this moment, may the next be out of the the reach of pain and sorrow. For the hand which gives and the hand which receives, are alike subject to the stroke of death. Delay not, therefore, to shew mercy, whilst it is yet in your power; since no one can say, that the opportunity, which

which now offers, may not be the last trust and indulgence of heaven.

Let but a few short moments pass, and we shall all lie down upon the common bed of mortality, where there is no distinction of persons. And when that awful period shall approach; when all the splendour and pomp of the world shall fail; when all the giddy prospects of ambition shall pass away; when the pleasures and gaieties of sense shall fade; when the springs of life are failing, and judgment and eternity are at hand; think, oh think, what a comfort it will be to your souls to have obeyed the will of God your Father, to have imitated the kindness of your beneficent Redeemer, to have laid out your time and wealth in doing good to the souls and bodies of men, and to be finally assured of that transporting welcome of your heavenly Master:— "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you before the foundation of the world; for I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink;

" drink; I was a stranger, and ye took
" me in; naked and ye clothed me; I
" was sick, and ye visited me; I was in
" prison, and ye came unto me. For, in-
" asmuch as ye have done it unto the
" least of these little ones, ye have it unto
" me. Enter therefore into the joy of
" your Lord."

SER-

SERMON LXXI.

Acts x. 1, 2.

There was a certain man in Cæsarea, called Cornelius, a Centurion of the band called the Italian band: a devout man, and one that feared God with his whole house, which gave much alms unto the people, and prayed to God always.

WE have in this short account of the Centurion Cornelius the picture of a very amiable and excellent man, who, though not enlightened with the knowledge of Christianity, is highly deserving of the imitation of the most perfect Christians in every part of his conduct. If we consider him in his private character, the text tells us, "he was a devout man;" devout,

devout, not only in the inward frame and temper of his soul, but also in the outward acts of religion; devout, not by sudden starts or transient raptures of piety, but by a regular and uniform constancy in devotion, for "he prayed to God always." If we consider him as a father or master over his own houshold, we find him careful to diffuse his own religious principles through his whole family; for he was not only a devout man himself, but "one that feared God, with all his house." And if we consider him in his relation to the rest of mankind, we find him animated by a warm philanthropy, which displayed itself in acts of liberality and charity: for "he gave much alms to the people."

Thus this good Centurion, though by his profession of arms exposed to all the temptations of rapine and extortion, so constantly then practised by the Roman soldiers, and to the corruption and immoralities so generally to be found amongst military men of all ages, was by his eminent and exemplary virtues excellently prepared for the reception of the gospel: when

when God was pleased to make him as eminent an example of his favour, in the manner and order of his conversion to Christianity. For he had the honour, not only of being the first Gentile called to the Christian faith, but also of being called to it by the message of an angel, with this honourable testimony of his piety and charity, " that his prayers and alms were " come up for a memorial before God."

Having then so amiable a pattern before us, recommended by the sanction of God himself, it will be worth our while to consider the several parts of it more distinctly, that they may make a more lasting and forcible impression upon our minds and conduct.

1. The text first points out to us the singular piety of Cornelius. " Now Cor- " nelius was a devout man, that prayed " to God always:" he was one, who, by frequent meditation and regular acts of devotion, had wrought the habit of his mind into a religious and heavenly disposition. Not that it was possible for him

in nature, or required by any law of religion, that he should pray without intermission. The words only imply, that this good man omitted no appointed or convenient season of prayer, and in the necessary intervals of devotion retained in his mind a just sense of his dependence on the God that made him, for every blessing; and therefore, in the estimation of God, and in the language of Scripture, is said to pray always. And thus ought every Christian, by frequent acts of devotion, and by a constant disposition to them, to keep alive in his mind an awful sense of God's majesty and his own weakness. His piety should resemble the fire of the altar under the Jewish law; which, though not always blazing out in the service of the Great Jehovah, was yet never suffered to be utterly extinguished, and, at least, was daily employed in the morning and evening sacrifice.

And as this religious temper of Cornelius does not oblige men to be always upon their knees, so neither does it warrant us to distinguish ourselves by a sad

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and demure countenance, as the hypocrites do; nor to expose ourselves and our religion to contempt by raptures and unseasonable gestures; or by a sanctimonious ostentation of uplifted hands and eyes, in the markets and corners of the streets. For sure I am, that it is no way necessary for men to be ridiculous, in order to be religious. On the contrary, true piety, like true charity, neither behaves itself unseemly, nor wishes to be seen of men: it will rather direct us, when we pray, to enter into our closet or secret chamber, and when we have there excluded the inspection of men, to pray to our God, who seeth in secret.

Neither again does constancy in devotion, whether private or public, oblige, no, nor even allow, men to neglect the proper duties of their station or profession. Such notions indeed have in all ages been inculcated by men of weak and enthusiastic heads; but they have no foundation in Scripture, when rightly understood, as we may justly collect from the example before us; for the devout

Cornelius was a Centurion over the Italian band of soldiers, and the soldiers that waited on him continually were devout men; yet piety neither hindered the one from executing his command, nor the other from discharging their duties of obedience; and that with an express testimony of God's approbation. In fact, the private duties of life are so far from being incompatible with true piety, that we are then serving God acceptably, when we are employed in the faithful discharge of them according to our several stations. And, on the other hand, the offices of piety are so far from hindering the prosecution of our secular affairs, that they sweeten the fatigue of them with a secret satisfaction, and encourage us to diligence in them, by the expectation of a blessing upon our honest endeavours. For, when a man has offered his morning sacrifice of prayer and thanksgiving to God, he then goes forth with cheerfulness to his labour until the evening. And in the evening, when he has acknowledged the blessing of God upon his labours, and implored the protection of

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the unsleeping eye of Providence over his house, he can say with the resignation and security of the Psalmist, "Now will "I lay me down in peace, and take my "rest, being fully convinced, that God "will make me dwell in safety."

But whilst we guard some against that enthusiastic extravagance in devotion, which leads them to expose religion to contempt by unseasonable fervours, or their families to ruin by a neglect of the necessary duties of life, it will become us still more to awake those unhappy slumberers to a sense of their duty, who live as without a God in the world, and seldom or never look up to the throne of grace, from whence every blessing is derived. Let such men well weigh the example of this heathen soldier, who, amidst the din of arms, prayed to God always. Let such men, with a serious attention, hear what St. Paul saith, where he gives that strict injunction to his Thessalonians, "to pray without ceasing." Let such men remember what a greater than St. Paul meant, when "he spake a parable, to

"the intent that men ought always to "pray, and not to faint." If then ye profess yourselves Christians; if ye assemble in this holy place to know what the will of the Lord is;—Why hearken ye not to the voice of his word?—Why, by a total neglect of divine ordinances, do ye live as heathens, and not as Christians?

Should any imagine, that the formality of one day's attendance in the sanctuary of God will excuse the neglect of him every other day, let them be assured, that he is unfit to come into the temple of God in public, who never looks up to the throne of God in private. He cannot come thither with that earnestness and devout frame of mind, which is to be acquired only by constant and habitual devotion: He cannot in a moment on the Sabbath-day lay aside those cares and pleasures of the world, which have intirely engaged his thoughts and excluded his God on every other day. And this is too clearly seen in the constant indevotion, in the wandering eyes, and still, I fear, more wandering imaginations, of any in almost every Christian congregation.

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When such men therefore approach this holy place, God seems to speak to them in the fire of his anger, as he did to Moses out of the flaming bush, "Come not nigh "hither; for the place where thou "standest is holy ground:" Thou hast none of those qualifications, which are necessary to recommend thee to God; thou wantest that humble and devout dependence upon him, which would lead thee daily to implore his protection; and therefore thou art unworthy to tread his courts, or approach his altars, with presumptuous and unhallowed feet.

A second part of this excellent Centurion's character is, that he took care to preserve a due sense of religion and piety in his family: "he feared the Lord with "all his house."

When God has blessed men with children, or entrusted to them the government of servants or dependents, it is their indispensable duty to watch over their spiritual, as well as temporal welfare, and to see that they execute the com-

mands of God as well as their own. The Apostle tells us, "If a man provides not "for his own houshold, he is worse than "an infidel." And if so severe a charge lies upon him, who provides not for the temporal necessities of his family, how much heavier a sentence will fall upon him, who neglects to make any provision for their spiritual subsistence? And yet it is melancholy to consider, how little attention is paid to so important a point, even with respect to those, in whose welfare we are most nearly concerned, I mean our own children. We are anxious to provide for them the external accomplishments, which will recommend them in the eyes of the world; but we are too careless in providing for them those Christian graces, which are the noblest of all ornaments, and which alone can recommend them in the sight of God. We are again solicitous enough to guard them against the dangers of fire or water; but we do not sufficiently consider, of how much more importance it is to guard them against the danger of being drowned in endless perdition, or cast into everlasting

ing burnings. And if parents neglect these important points, from whom can children claim instruction, or to whom shall they look up for that information, which is necessary to guide their feet into the way of peace?

But this care ought not to be confined to our children alone, but ought to extend even to the lowest and most subordinate members of every family. For those who are committed to our charge, whether as apprentices or servants, being far removed from the eye and guidance of their parents and more immediate guardians, stand in need of a more particular observation, especially in the vicinity of the Metropolis, which we know by woful experience to be fertile in every species of temptation and danger.

Let therefore every master of a family, in the first place, imitate the conduct of Cornelius, by setting a good example, in his own person, of fearing God. For, though an irregular liver should reprove and discountenance in his domestics what he

he practises himself, yet it is certain that his words will have but little weight against the more cogent power of example. For instance: With what authority can he rebuke drunkenness in his dependents, who utters his admonitions with inflamed eyes and a stammering tongue, and who is himself a nightly example of bestial intemperance? Again, with what countenance can a father reprimand his child, or a master his servant, for swearing, whom he daily overawes by the terror of execrable oaths? And the same is true in every other instance. For though a man should utter his precepts with the tongue of angels, yet, if the tenor of his life be in open contradiction to them, he would deservedly seem to those who heard him, but as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal.

2dly. It is the duty of every master of a family to join good instructions to a good example, and to take every opportunity of instilling the sound and wholesome doctrines of the Christian faith. At the delivery of the law to the Jews of old,

old; God himself gave this solemn and particular charge to every one present: "These words, which I command thee "this day, shall be in thine heart, and "thou shalt teach them diligently to thy "children, and shalt talk of them when "thou sittest in thy house, and when "thou walkest by the way, and when "thou liest down, and when thou risest "up." "Thou shalt teach them dili-"gently to thy children:" and indeed, what diligence can be too much in the nurture and admonition of those, whom we have brought into a world full of cares and toils; through the innumerable hazards of which it will be difficult for them to steer their course aright, when armed and fortified by the best education and instruction? And again, what pleasure can equal that of fashioning these tender innocents, whilst, like the soft clay in the hand of the potter, they are susceptible of any impression we please to give them; of beholding them, like their Saviour, increasing in wisdom as they do in stature; and, like their guardian angels, shining in innocence and native

tive loveliness? And of all men happiest is that parent, who seeing the fruit of his instructions in the lives of a virtuous progeny, is able at the hour of death to adopt the language of our Saviour with respect to his disciples, "Of those which "thou hast given me, I have lost none."

But if that should be the unhappy case of parents, which the Apostle complains of in the Epistle to the Hebrews, and which, I fear, is too general in the inferior ranks of the community; "That "when they ought to be teachers of "others, they themselves have need to "be taught which are the first principles "and oracles of God:" then let their own inability to instruct their families at home, at least prevail upon them so far as to bring them to the house of God; where, though they may not always hear enough to satisfy the itching ears of idle curiosity, they will seldom fail to hear enough to instruct them in the road to happiness. Should any, on the other hand, not plead want of knowledge, but rather want of leisure or inclination to

instruct

instruct their families at home; I answer, they are therefore also more strictly bound to repair to the temple of God, with their sons and their daughters, their men servants and their maid servants, and the stranger within their gates, that God's house may be full, and that they may fall down, with united hearts and voices, before the Lord their maker.

3dly. Every parent and master should maintain a strict and orderly government in his house and among those committed to his care. I do not mean by this, that he should rule his children with a rod of iron, or, in the language of Scripture, be frantic among his servants. But as Scripture commands him to forbear threatning to servants, so reason warns him to avoid familiarity; and again, as the former instructs him not to provoke his children to wrath, so does the latter not to invite them on to insolence. For the improper indulgence of parents naturally creates the same rebellious spirit in children, as David's ill-timed fondness did in Adonijah, whom he never displeased at any

time in saying, why hast thou done so; and who therefore, I had almost said, justly rewarded him by endeavouring to usurp his kingdom, saying, I will be king. Nay, if parents content themselves with restraining licentious children only by gentle reproofs and soft admonitions, if they speak to them only in the soothing language of Eli to his profligate sons, Hophni and Phineas, "Why do ye such "things, my sons? Nay, my sons, it is "no good report which I hear of you;" they may justly expect to see their children come to the same calamitous end with those two monsters of iniquity, and, like Eli, bring a curse upon their house, because, like him, when their sons made themselves vile, they restrained them not, by the proper powers of parental authority and necessary discipline.

Lastly, to crown thy endeavours, and to sanctify thy house for obtaining a blessing and not a curse, observe stated times for daily offices of devotion, and, like Cornelius, worship the Lord with thy whole house. For who can say with holy

Job,

Job, "It may be, perhaps, my children "have sinned;" It not only may be, but it must be, that both thou and thy children have fallen seven times a day: Remember therefore, like Job, continually to offer up daily supplications for their daily sins and thy own. And shouldst thou be disposed to say, like the prophet of old, Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, or with what form of devotion shall I bow myself before the high God, it would be easy to answer, that there are innumerable forms adapted to family devotion, and which are easy to be procured. But one there is especially, which ought to find a place in the family and closet of every Christian, I mean the Common Prayer of our Church; which expresses all the wants and supplications of a sinner in the most ardent and becoming manner, and of which we may justly say, in comparison of all other forms, what David said of the sword of Goliah, "There is none like it."

Blessed then is that devout Christian, who like Cornelius fears the Lord with all

all his house; who encourages them by his example, directs them by his instructions, governs them by his authority, and sanctifies them by prayer! Of such a man we may safely affirm, that he is not far from the kingdom of God.

The last part of this good centurion's character is, that he gave much alms unto the people; which intimates, that his liberality extended to all among the people, whether Jews, or Greeks, or Proselytes. And indeed true charity knows no distinction of nation and country; but wherever distress and misery appear, there the god-like virtue of compassion will follow, with healing in its wings.

Again; his liberality was not only universally, but also liberally diffused: for he gave much alms unto the people. It is not however the quantity of the gift, but the intention of the giver, which constitutes true and acceptable charity. For if our alms are only done to be seen of men, however great they may be, we shall have our reward; but it will only be the

the reward of the vain hypocrite. But the charitable disposition of the will adds holy wings to riches, which make them ascend up for a memorial before God, who will not forget our work and labour of love.

Let none therefore refuse to exercise this charity, or plead inability to give. I well know the difficulties under which many labour in these times of enormous and increasing expence, and who have therefore little to spare: Yet, let them not forbear to give of that little. Let them remember, that the widow's mite has been proverbially mentioned with honour from the earliest ages of Christianity, and that a few drops of oil and wine, with the addition of two-pence, constituted the chief part of the liberality of that good Samaritan, whom Christ himself recommended to our imitation. Let them remember too, that an especial blessing is every where promised to the virtues of charity and compassion, extending even to our latest posterity. How ambitious therefore should every parent

be to deserve this blessing! And whilst on the one hand, he endeavours to make his children the children of God, and his servants the servants of God; whilst, as a priest over his own houshold, he makes his house a house of prayer, and offers up a daily sacrifice for himself and his dependents; so, on the other hand, he ought, like Cornelius, to crown his piety with charity, and to let his light so shine before men, that they may see his good works, and glorify his father in heaven.

Thus have I laid before you, with all plainness and simplicity, the duty of every master of a family, drawn from the example of the good centurion Cornelius. And sure I am, that neither arguments nor eloquence will be wanting, to recommend the practice of it to every man, who seriously considers the present state of things amongst us; a state of things, which, without either the exaggeration of spleen or the misrepresentation of needless terror, affords a prospect truly terrible and alarming. For surely there cannot be a more truly alarming prospect, than

when

when the very first ends of civil society, mutual security and protection, are defeated; when neither life nor property are for a moment secure from the ruffian that walketh in darkness or the robber that assaulteth at the noon-day; when the most respectable members of the community are forced to tremble before the basest and most abandoned; when the vindictive powers of the law have lost their terror, and even the wisest provisions of the legislature are either eluded by legal chicane, or defeated by an injudicious and ill-timed lenity. It can hardly be said, that existence in such a society is at all preferable to the state of the solitary traveller in the desert, who startles at every shadow, trembles at every breeze, and expects every moment to become the prey of the wild beasts which howl around him.

With regard to those who are grown old in iniquity, though perhaps young in age, little I fear can be done to stop them in their fatal career. They will have their course, and the grave its premature

prey, in spite of every friendly remonstrance, in spite of every terrific warning.

But with respect to those, who are yet untainted with the dangerous corruptions of the age, it is in the power of every master of a family to do much, by a faithful and diligent discharge of his duty, in the several articles, which it has been the business of this discourse to recommend. Much too has been done, and I trust still may be done, by those, who have patronized and supported the various charitable foundations, which do so much honour to this kingdom; and especially those, which have for their object the instruction of young persons on the Sabbath day. For, if there be a possibility of restraining the lower orders of people from brutal violence and licentiousness, it must be by early culture and instruction; by instilling into them a deep sense of God and religion, and by imprinting on their minds a constant and awful consideration of that solemn account they must one day give.

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And though in these, as in all other human institutions, success may not always keep an equal pace with our wishes and endeavours; though the seed we have sown may not always bring forth fruit unto perfection; yet we may reasonably hope, that we have saved some precious souls from destruction; that we have laid the foundation of better days to come, and contributed to the future welfare and tranquillity of our posterity and country; which is no inconsiderable object to every generous and rational mind.

But there is still a higher consideration, to animate us all in the faithful discharge of these duties; that is, the approbation of our own consciences, and an obedience to the commands of God. We may wish indeed, that our labours may be effectual, both for the good of those who are entrusted to our care, and for the advantage of society in general: nay farther, we cannot but earnestly be solicitous, that the children we love may never depart from the good way, in which they have been trained, but may go on from

strength to strength; yet whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, we shall have the satisfaction of knowing that we have done our own duty, and therefore may rest assured of meeting with a due reward. Whenever therefore the uplifted arm of death shall smite us, we shall lie down on the bed of mortality with an undisturbed mind: we shall take our last leave of the dear pledges of conjugal affection without any wounding reflections or painful remembrance on our side; and having done all for their happiness, which prudence, precept and example empowered us to do, we shall address them in some such language as this: 'Behold, my children, I go the way of all the earth, and I know that ye shall see my face no more. My faultering tongue is now unable to add to the friendly precepts I have already given, and my example will soon be no more before your eyes. I can only therefore now entreat you to call to mind, how I have walked before you in all righteousness, and to remember, that by the space of many years I ceased not to warn every one of you, night

night and day, with tears. And now, having fought the good fight of faith, and finished my own course, it only remains for me, finally, to commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.'

I am sensible, I have already trespassed long, much too long upon your patience: yet suffer me to request your indulgence one moment longer on a subject of such general concern; whilst I entreat every vicious or careless parent to consider, how much, besides their own sins, they have to answer for; even no less than the present and eternal welfare of their children.

And, on the other hand, let me no less earnestly request those, who have virtuous and honest parents, to consider seriously, how much they have to answer for, if they deviate from their good example; to consider, how heavy a crime it is to bring down grey hairs with sorrow to the grave;

how shameful it is to heap reproach and infamy upon an unspotted family; and lastly, how dreadful are the curses, which are denounced against those who are disobedient or unthankful to parents. If therefore any such hear me this day, let them seriously lay their wickedness to heart; let them see, from the daily examples before their eyes, in what their wickedness will certainly end; and may God grant, that seeing it, they may turn from the error of their ways, and live!

SER-

SERMON LXXII.

LUKE xvi. 19, 20, 21.

There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day:—And there was a certain beggar, named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate full of sores, and desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores.

THERE is not throughout the whole Gospel a more affecting picture than that which is here given under the characters of a rich voluptuous glutton and a poor despised beggar; whether we consider the difference of their circumstances when

when living, or the difference of their fates when dead.

The one is represented to us under all the circumstances of regal affluence and splendour, clothed in purple and fine linen, and faring sumptuously every day. The other under all the bitter evils of misery and destitution; naked and full of sores; desiring only to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table; which seem however to have been cruelly denied him. Nor does he appear to have received any other relief, than that the dogs, more benevolent than their master, came and licked his sores.

We are not long kept in suspence with regard to the event of this shocking scene, which does so much dishonour to humanity. For soon a new and dreadful change succeeds, which clears up the wisdom and justice of Providence. The poor despised beggar dies, and leaving behind him all the wants and miseries of afflicted mortality, is carried by a guard of angels into Abraham's bosom. The rich man also dies

dies and is buried. And was the memory of his past cruelty buried with him? No: in that hell, which he so well deserved, he lifts up his eyes in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.

It has been much controverted among the learned, whether our Saviour proposes this narration as a real history, or only as a parable. There are, however, several circumstances, which seem very clearly to determine it to be the latter. For in the first place it is hardly possible to suppose, that what is here said of the rich man's conversation with Abraham; of his lifting up his eyes in torments and seeing Lazarus in Abraham's bosom, with the several other particulars of the story, should be any other than a fable. Again, we know that the whole story itself is taken from an antient Jewish tradition, and only accommodated by our Saviour to enforce the great doctrine of commiserating and relieving the necessities of the distressed. And in fact we find, that the several parts of this story are exactly agreeable to, and

founded upon, Jewish notions. Thus where it is said, that the beggar was carried by angels into Abraham's bosom, there is a plain allusion to the Jewish doctrine, which represented the happiness of heaven under the similitude of a feast, at which the righteous were seated with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of God. Thus also when it is said, that the rich man lift up his eyes in hell, and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom, we in like manner trace the footsteps of Jewish fable and antiquity. For the word ἅδης, which we translate hell, properly signifies an invisible place, which the Jews supposed to be divided into two parts, the one for the reception of the souls of the righteous, the other for those of the wicked. And in this hell it was, that the rich man being in torments, that is, in the part appropriated to the wicked, saw Abraham afar off, beyond that gulph which was fixed for an impassable boundary, in the mansion of the blessed. I might make the same observation upon some other parts of this affecting story; but perhaps enough has been said already

to

to shew, that the whole is no other than a parable; one of those ingenious fictions intended to make a deeper impression upon the mind by representing things in the strong and lively colours of a real transaction.

What colouring then can be stronger than that which is here made use of by our Saviour to deter men from those heavy sins, which brought the rich man into so deplorable a state of misery? We see the unhappy wretch in a moment stripped of all that grandeur, which had puffed up his soul and made him deaf to the cries of the poor, and by a just sentence plunged into the torments of hell, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels. In this situation, amid the racking pains of his own conscience, under the sense of God's everlasting displeasure and the loss of heaven, under all the bitter agonies of utter despair, he asks so small a favour as a drop of water to cool his tongue; and yet even that is denied.

One might think this a sufficient description of the poor wretch's misery: it might seem a sufficient torment that he was in hell; but a double and worse hell yet remained for him, even that of seeing Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. Could there be a more painful sight? Could there be a greater aggravation of his torments, than to see him, whom he had so lately driven from his gate as a despicable beggar, now transformed into an angel of light, and enjoying the glories of heaven, whilst himself was doomed to all the horrors of hell?

And yet, as if even this was not sufficient to redouble his pangs, and kindle a worse hell in his soul than that which preyed upon his body, even holy Abraham calls upon him to remember that, which he certainly above all things most wished to forget, that bitterest ingredient in his cup of sorrow: "Son, remember that "thou in thy life-time receivedst thy good. "things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: "but

"but now he is comforted, and thou art "tormented."

Such was the deplorable condition to which this unhappy man had reduced himself by his folly! Will it not then be a very natural, as well as interesting, enquiry for us all to make, what were the particular crimes, which brought upon him so heavy a sentence?

The first of these seems to have been pride. Exalted with prosperity, his heart was vainly puffed up, and taught him to consider the rest of mankind as beings below his notice or regard. Hence he could behold an unhappy fellow-creature groveling at his feet, under all the distresses of want, without condescending to enquire into or relieve them; though at a time when no legal provision was made for the poor, and therefore it was a duty to relieve those, whose necessities led them abroad to solicit the aid of the rich. And much I fear the same spirit is still too often the companion of wealth and grandeur. Riches, among too many, seem

to supply the place of every thing, and to raise them above the common level of mortality. Hence affability, courtesy, meekness, and humility, are virtues unknown or disregarded. Hence, not content with those advantages which they have received from Providence, they despise and trample under foot their inferiors with daring insolence and unfeeling barbarity. Hence they are deaf to the voice of complaint, and stop their ears against the cries of the poor and needy. But what an abuse is this of the wise and gracious designs of Providence! It is indeed necessary, that there should be different ranks amongst mankind, for carrying on the purposes of society; but it never was intended that one man should lord it over another with oppressive tyranny. Pride was not made for man in any shape; much less is it to be exercised by man towards man. For, however our conditions or abilities may differ, they are all the appointment of the same God, who maketh one man poor and another rich; we are all fashioned in the image of the same Creator, and must all return to

the same level, after the revolution of a few short moments. "Look then to the earth from whence thou wast taken, or to the dust to which thou shalt soon return, thou that art puffed up with pride, and learn humility, lest thou also come into a place of torment*."

2dly, Another part of the rich man's guilt seems to have arisen from his luxurious and sensual way of life: "He was "clothed in purple and fine linen, and "fared sumptuously every day." Not that these words, simply considered, imply any imputation of guilt; for a man may be clothed in purple and fine linen, and fare sumptuously every day, and yet be both a good man and a good Christian. But since we do not find this rich man described as being at any time better employed, we have just ground to believe, that his whole care and attention was confined to the gratification of his sensual appetites; and in this consisted his guilt. The truth is, the sinfulness of

* "Ινα ὅταν ἐπαιρώμεθα, διὰ τὸν χῶν συστελλώμεθα. [Nazianz.]

luxury does not arise from the use, but from the abuse, of the good things of the world. Christianity no where requires us to live in perpetual mortification, or to be always clothed in sackcloth or covered with ashes. On the contrary we are told, that every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving. But, at the same time, we are admonished not to abuse the liberty which the gospel allows us. For to make a God of one's belly, and to live in a constant round of sensual indulgence, is neither agreeable to the purity of the gospel, nor the morality of the heathens: For even they could see, that gluttony, drunkenness, and uncleanness, weakened the powers both of body and mind, and therefore rendered men unfit for the discharge of their several duties. And a much nobler instructor has taught us, that if we would gain the mastery and obtain an incorruptible crown, we must be temperate in all things; well seeing, that a constant circle even of innocent indulgences have a tendency to stifle all the good seeds of virtue and religion in the soul,

soul, to bring on a neglect of God, and a forgetfulness of eternity. We may therefore be clothed in purple and fine linen, but we must not at the same time forget to put on that nobler ornament of a meek and pious spirit; we may rejoice too, and fare sumptuously every day, provided we remember, that it is our best meat to do the will of God, and our noblest joy to have our names written in heaven.

But the worst and heaviest part of the rich man's guilt was his hard-heartedness, or want of charity to the poor. He could see a forlorn Lazarus lie at his gate, full of sores, and ready to perish with hunger, without affording him any relief, or being moved with compassion at his miserable condition. He could fare sumptuously every day, whilst a fellow-creature, formed in the same image, born to the same hopes, the object of the same Providence, endued with the same powers and feelings, was cast out to the company of his more humane dogs; he could glory in his purple and fine linen, whilst probably the poor Lazarus had not wherewith to de-

fend his nakedness from the hard ground or piercing wind. And what was the consequence? He denied him the crumbs which fell from his table, and in return, he himself was denied a drop of water to cool his tongue in the flames of hell.

Such then was the guilt, such the fate of the rich man in the parable: and let us remember that such also will be our fate, if we do not carefully avoid his guilt.

To you then, whom Providence has blessed with affluence, suffer me to recommend the serious consideration of this affecting story. Like the rich man here described, you have received your good things in this life, and on the proper use of them depends your eternal welfare. Remember then, that to whom much is given, of him also shall be much required; many public acts of charity and benevolence, as an example to others, and many secret reliefs to the distressed, for the sake of Christ and your own consciences. Remember too, that your good things were given you for this very purpose, to clothe the

the naked and feed the hungry. Ye are no more than stewards for the poor, whom God has entrusted with the disposal of his blessings. His blessings I call them; for there is nothing we can call our own: we came naked into the world, and therefore whatever we possess is only lent us by God. However, therefore, some men may boast of their acquisitions, they are no more themselves than dependents on the charity and mercies of God. His is the air we breathe and the food we eat; his is the head by which we contrive, and the hand by which we execute all our schemes and contrivances. To him therefore, and to his blessed will, should both we and all we have for ever be subservient. This gratitude requires of us as the only testimony we can give of our thankfulness for the mercies he hath showered upon us. This too our duty requires from us, as a proof of our obedience to him, who hath again and again commanded us to put on bowels of mercy and compassion, and in no wise to turn our face from the poor and needy.

And however we may flatter ourselves, without this virtue, vain will be every other. We may fast, we may pray, we may read the scriptures, we may lead sober and regular lives, we may be just and upright in our dealings; but without charity, all this will not save us from the vengeance of Heaven. The tree may blossom indeed, but unless it also bring forth fruit, it will be hewn down and cast into the fire. In fact, we find that it was the want of this virtue, which chiefly, if not solely, condemned the rich man to the flames of hell. He is not accused of getting his wealth by injustice, or using it with oppression; he is not charged with the commission of any heinous crime against God, but only with inhumanity towards man; he relieved not the miseries of his poor and distressed brother.

And if this single crime deserved so heavy a sentence, will it not make one shudder to reflect what their lot must be, who grind the faces of the poor by oppression or usury; who take the hungry man's bread and give it to dogs, or waste that

that substance upon harlots, which belongs to the distressed members of Christ!

But we need not throw these crimes, or any other, into the scale to add to the weight of our condemnation: it will be guilt enough to have withheld our bread from the hungry, and our drink from the thirsty, even though we should have withheld it from ourselves at the same time. For though Dives was damned for starving the poor man whilst he pampered himself, yet it will not mitigate our sin in starving the poor, to say that we starved ourselves too. The miser may indeed call upon his threadbare coat and famished looks to witness that he makes a beggar of himself; yet he is not the less bound to relieve those whom God has made so: for his riches were not given him to be put under a bushel, but like the beams of the sun, to diffuse joy and plenty on himself and all around him.

Here then, ye misers, learn the true and best use of all those hoarded treasures,

which cost you so many anxious days and sleepless nights. An inspired Apostle will teach you better how to apply them than all the rules of œconomy, and all the calculations of gain, which ye so carefully have studied:—"Charge them, says he, "who are rich in this world, that they be "not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain "riches, but in the living God: that they "do good, that they be rich in good "works, ready to distribute, willing to "communicate." Nor can ye wish for higher interest than the same Apostle here promises for thus laying out your darling treasure:—"laying up in store, "says he, a good foundation against the "time to come, that they may lay hold "on eternal life."

And be not afraid by this means of diminishing what you have to leave to your children or heirs. If they have but a little, with God's blessing, it will be enough; and, without it, all you can leave them will be nothing worth; the rust and moth will soon corrupt it all.

Remem-

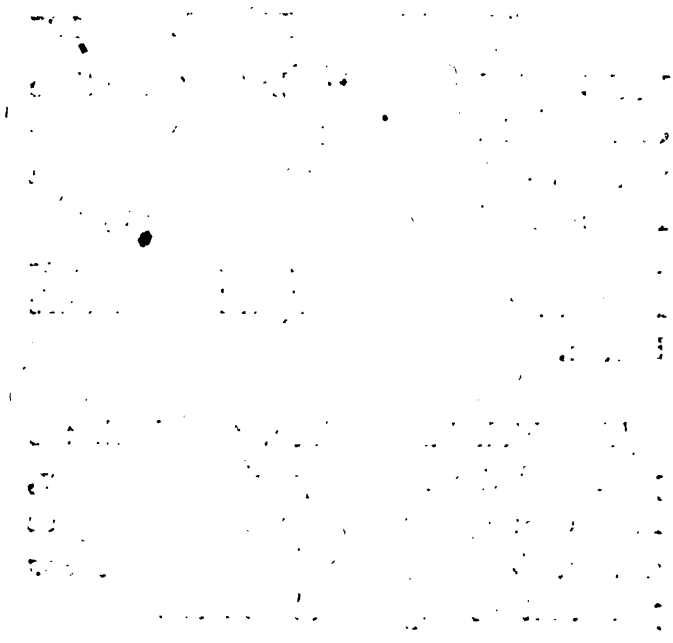
Remember too that your time for doing good is both short and uncertain. Can ye think that your riches will make you immortal? Can ye hope to carry your ill-gotten lands and possessions with you, or to transmit them into the regions of eternity? Or, if ye could, what would they avail you there? Would all your riches asswage the pangs of conscience, or bribe the justice of an avenging God? Would they prevail upon Abraham to send a messenger to warn your brethren, or extort from Lazarus a drop of water to cool your tongue? No: vain and fruitless are such hopes:—they are the dreams of phrenzy, the wild workings of a distempered brain. The voice of truth and reason will tell you far other things: it will tell you, that soon will all your treasures be buried in darkness, soon will all your enjoyments fade, except those which spring from a good conscience and a right use of God's blessings. Soon will that awful hour approach, when every worldly comfort shall fail, and the grave shall open its devouring jaws to receive you. And then, dreadful will it be to have your last moments

moments disturbed with conscious guilt, and your dying groans interrupted with the imagined cries of the poor, against whom ye now shut your hands and hearts. But still more dreadful will it be to be awaked by the last trumpet hereafter, and to hear that terrible sentence rend your hearts:—"Son, remember that "thou in thy life-time receivedst thy "good things, and likewise Lazarus his "evil things: but now he is comforted, "and thou art to be tormented." Delay not therefore, whilst you have yet opportunity, to ward off those heavy curses, by doing good unto all men, as far as your abilities extend.

Lastly, my brethren, of what condition soever ye are, whether rich or poor, go on chearfully in the faithful discharge of your duty; knowing that ye shall reap in due time, if ye faint not. The parable before us will teach you, that your labour will not be forgotten, or your expectations perish with the grave. The poor Lazarus was indeed for a while laid at the rich man's gate full of sores, and seemed to be forsaken

both by God and man;—but soon the time of his trial was ended; soon his patience under his afflictions was rewarded; soon a new and brighter scene was opened, and the loathsome and despised beggar transformed into an angel of light in Abraham's bosom.

To which happy place, that both the poor and the rich may rejoice together, may God of his infinite mercy bring us all, for the sake of that Saviour, who was poor that we might become rich!



SERMON LXXIII.

Acts ii. 32.

This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we are all witnesses.

THAT the Messias was to die and rise again, both the types prefigured, and the prophecies of the Old Testament foretold: And that our Jesus, whom we believe to be the Messias, did suffer and undergo the shameful death of the cross, the Jews and Heathens unanimously acknowledge; though their unreasonable malice urge it as a reproach to his person and authority, and a shame to our belief: But that he rose again, few, or none of them,

them, though pressed by sense of miracle, conviction of reason, and clearness of prophecy, will be brought to believe. For they reasonably infer, that if they should once grant the truth of his resurrection, they would be proved liars out of their own mouths, and their own confessions would shame their infidelity. And therefore we find St. Peter, in this chapter, arguing against them with such nervous reasons, as neither the most subtle cunning could evade, nor a tolerable degree of obstinacy withstand: For he shews out of the Psalms of the Prophet David, that the Messias was to rise again, and he then proves, that our Jesus, after his death and crucifixion, according to that, and other prophecies, did actually rise again; "For this Jesus hath God "raised up, whereof we are all wit-"nesses."

From these words I shall take occasion to consider first, The efficient cause of Christ's resurrection, and that is "God."

2dly.

2dly. The proof of his resurrection, and that is the testimony of the Apostles: "whereof we are all witnesses."

1st. Then, the efficient cause of Christ's resurrection was God. For no other power than that which is omnipotent can raise the dead: it is a thing clearly beyond the activity of the creature, and infinitely disproportionate to those measures of strength, with which any finite being is endued. Some indeed are such sceptics in philosophy, and such infidels in religion, that neither reason can persuade them of the possibility, nor revelation convince them of the certainty, of a resurrection. But those who believe either, can imagine it to be effected no other way than by the power of the Almighty. Nothing but infinite wisdom understands the mystical union of the soul and body, and nothing but infinite power, after their dissolution, can re-unite them. For, to raise our bodies from the dust of death is a work fit only for that irresistible power, which first created them out of nothing. And this is set down by St. Paul in such strength

strength and exaggeration of expressions, as no author can parallel, and which our translation falls very far short of reaching: "That we may know, says he, what is "the exceeding greatness of his power to "us-ward that believe, according to the "working of his mighty power," (or, as it should rather be, according to the might, the utmost extent and efficacy of his power) "which he wrought in Christ, "when he raised him from the dead."

And here we must take notice, that though in this place and others, our Saviour is said to be raised by God the Father, yet in others, he is said to be raised by himself: the reason of which is, that Christ was a wonderful and extraordinary person, composed of two distinct natures, God and man, did really and essentially participate of both, and whatsoever might be said of each nature might truly be spoken of the whole person of Christ: and therefore the Scriptures sometimes speak passively, "He is raised;" sometimes actively, "He rose." He is raised, as man; he rose, as God: To be raised

raised by the power of another, was the imperfection of his humanity; to rise by the power of himself, was the great privilege of his divinity. Thus Christ was raised, and yet rose; and the sense is consistent and true, if considered with respect to the two different and distinct natures, which made up the whole person of Christ.

The Socinians, indeed, who deny the divinity of our Saviour, deny likewise that his resurrection was effected by any proper virtue or power of his own. They believe that the Father raised Christ, because St. Paul has taught them so; and we believe the same: But they will not believe that Christ raised himself, though he hath expressly assured them of it: For thus he speaks to the Jews: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I "will raise it up." Of which the Evangelist gives this explication, "He spake "of the temple of his body:" which he might very properly call a temple, because the fullness of the Godhead dwelt in him bodily. Where, by raising up, is not meant, as the Socinians pretend, the

lifting up of his body out of the grave, after life had been put into it: for then any one might have raised it up as well as Christ: but the raising up a body, in the language of Scripture, means the putting life into it, the re-uniting it with the same soul: And therefore to say, that he raised it, after the Father had quickened it, is a meer shift and evasion, and wholly inconsistent with that power of life and death, which our Saviour claims to himself, when he says, "I lay down my life, "that I might take it again: no man "taketh it from me, but I lay it down "of myself: I have power to lay it down, "and I have power to take it up again." So that our Saviour's death was a voluntary submission to the will of his Father, and his resurrection was an immediate effect of his own proper power and omnipotence: and thus was our blessed Saviour raised by God the Father, and yet by himself; being God as well as man.

2dly. The resurrection of Christ being a matter of fact, done so many ages ago, our chief evidence for the truth of it must

be the testimony of those, who affirm that they saw him after his resurrection. This is the ground into which all the Apostles, and more especially St. Paul, resolve the belief of this article, "That he was seen "of Cephas, then of the twelve, then of "five hundred brethren at once, most of "whom are now alive, after that he was "seen of James, then of all the Apostles, "and, last of all, he was seen of me also."

Now, that the testimony of the Apostles is of sufficient validity for us to ground our belief of Christ's resurrection upon it, will appear, if we enquire first, Whether they were such persons as might certainly know the things they relate; and secondly, Whether they were men of such integrity, that they were not likely to relate more than they knew to be true. For, where the persons are furnished with an opportunity to know the truth of what they relate, and have sufficient integrity to relate no more than they know; there can be no reason at all, under such circumstances, either to deny the evidence, or suspect the testimony.

1st. Then, the resurrection of our Lord from the dead is reported to us by such witnesses, as might certainly know the things related by them. For first, The Apostles lived in the same place and country, where the thing is reported to be done, that is, in Judea, where our Lord was crucified, and where he appeared after his resurrection, and therefore might be eye-witnesses of the fact. The resurrection of our Saviour was also a common object of sense, such as their hands and eyes could not fail to inform them of; since the body with which he arose was of the same nature with their own, and the same which was committed to the grave: and therefore they had as strong evidence that they conversed with him after his resurrection, as we can have that we converse with our nearest friends. For, that Christ's was a real body, and no spectre or phantasm, which might delude the eyes or impose upon the senses, appears from the scrupulous investigation of St. Thomas, who would not believe, unless he might put his hand into the hole of his sides, and see in his hand the print

of

of the nails. Now, our Saviour, by condescending to satisfy him in his scruples, hath thereby made it evident, that the body with which he rose from the grave, was the same individual body which before was crucified, and buried in the sepulchre. And that the rest of the Apostles were not men of easy natures or great credulity, so as to be imposed upon by a mere phantasm or apparition, appears from hence; That when those three pious women, Mary Magdalen, Joanna, and Mary, the mother of James, who went, according to the custom of the Hebrews, to embalm him; contrary to their expectations found him alive, held him by the feet and worshipped him, and then ran with great joy and fear to bring his disciples word; they all entertained the news with distrust and infidelity, looking on it as the idle suggestion of abused and fantastic persons. And afterwards, when the two disciples going to Emmaus were surprized with his unexpected appearance, and talked and eat with him, and told it to the rest, their story found no better success than the other. After this, he

was seen by St. Peter: But the disciples did not think him infallible, and therefore believed him not. At last, when all the Apostles, except Thomas, were assembled together, Jesus came and stood in the midst of them: But they were so far from being credulous in embracing a phantasm instead of Christ, that they were seized upon with a sudden fear and consternation, supposing that they had seen a spirit. But our Saviour soon undeceived them, by appealing to the judgment of their senses; saying, "Handle "me and see; for a spirit hath not flesh "and bones, as ye see me have." Now, the more suspicious and incredulous the Apostles were at first, concerning our Lord's resurrection, the greater evidence it is, that they had an undoubted and certain knowledge of what they reported afterwards, and that there were strong convictions in the nature of the thing itself, which could satisfy such scrupulous and suspicious persons. If the Apostles had been prepossessed with hopes of our Saviour's rising again, and had believed his resurrection upon the report of others,

and

and upon that ground had transmitted it to posterity, we might then have suspected the easiness of their belief and the uncertainty of their knowledge. But when we find they were so slow and backward to believe, that they would not trust the report of others, nor even credit their own eyes, unless they had the concurrent testimony of their hands, we cannot imagine but that they had sufficient knowledge and conviction to assure both themselves and us, that our Saviour rose from the dead. And therefore one justly says, "*Valde dubitatum est ab illis, ne dubitare-*"*tur a nobis*:" it was doubted by them, that after-ages of the Church might have no ground to distrust the certainty of their knowledge, and the reasons of their conviction.

But 2dly: The Apostles were men of such integrity, that they related no more than what they knew to be true. And this will appear clear and unquestionable, if we can discover no secular designs or interests, which might tempt them so confidently to vouch a falsehood, and de-

lude the world into a belief of so bold an imposture. For we cannot imagine that any man should be so void of all shame and ingenuity, as publicly to preach and propagate an untruth, unless interest and honours, pleasures or emoluments, were the great temptations to such infamous schemes of fraud and falsehood. Now, the Apostles were so far from being actuated by such motives in preaching the resurrection of Christ, that the belief of their own doctrine prevailed so far with them, as to make them renounce all the satisfactions and comforts which the world could give them. Wife and children, friends and relations, houses and country, ease and quiet, were all forsaken by them; that so they might convince men of a truth of so great importance and concern. Nay, so satisfied were they of the truth and interesting consequences of the doctrine of the resurrection, and so industrious in spreading through the whole world the intelligence of it, that neither ignominy nor disgrace, poverty nor persecution, nor fire and faggot, and all the most exquisite torments which in-

genious

genious malice could invent, could either discourage them from propagating the belief, or force them to a denial of the truth of it. Their resolution was as strong as their conviction was great, and the boldness of their courage was only equal to the certainty of their doctrine. Now, can it ever be imagined, that men of so many different humours and interests, qualities and conditions, should ever unite together only to cheat themselves into ruin, and the world into the belief of a falsehood? Can any man believe, that there should be such a pleasure and delight in propagating a notorious imposture, as could mitigate the pain of racks and tortures, make death eligible, and destruction lovely? We find that all men have a natural aversion to pain, and nothing can make them submit to it but the strong allurements of pleasure, profit, or honour: But the Apostles cannot be supposed to have been influenced by any of these: For the fountain of honour was in the hands of the Jews and Romans, from whom they could expect no greater favour or respect,

than

than their Master, the holy Jesus, had received from them. Nay, he had beforehand assured them, that they should be despised and hated of all men for his sake: And the event was answerable to the prediction: For, so far were they from receiving either pleasures, or profits, or honours, that they met with nothing but scorn and reproach, death and persecution, from the greatest part of mankind. And can we now seriously think, that any, who had the common reason and feelings of men, would part with all the satisfactions and enjoyments of the world, expose themselves to continual hazards and insults, and at last undergo death itself, for the sake of a mere fable, the baseless fabric of their own imagination? It is true, indeed, the possessions of the Apostles were not many, nor their riches great: but we well know that the little all of the poor is as dear and valuable to them as the abundance of the rich is to its possessors: and therefore we are not to regard how much they parted with, but how chearfully they parted with all they had, and moreover laid down

their

their lives, to assure the world of the truth of Christ's resurrection. And certainly we cannot believe, that they would have done all this, had there not been some more powerful attractives in the truth and excellency of the doctrine they preached, than in the ease, the honours, or emoluments of the present world.

Should it be said, that there may be found instances in history of strange and wild enthusiasts, who have suffered death for asserting very extravagant and absurd opinions; I answer, That these opinions related always to mere matters of speculation, and were such as those who professed them firmly believed to be true, and therefore maintained them even at the expence of their lives: But, that a great number of men should unite in chearfully submitting to contempt and poverty, racks and tortures, and the most painful modes of dying, only for the sake of promulging what was known to themselves to be a falsehood, respecting a plain and simple matter of fact, is a thing which no history can parallel, and

which

which is much harder to be believed than any mystery of our holy religion. In a word therefore, a matter of fact, which has only some of the proofs to support it, by which the resurrection of Christ is attested, may be true; but one, which has them all, cannot be false.

Having now gone through what I first proposed to speak to, I shall conclude this discourse with a short inference or two, which the Holy Scriptures point out to us, as clearly arising from the doctrine of Christ's resurrection from the dead.

1st Then; the resurrection of Christ from the dead should administer comfort to all those troubled souls, who groan under a sense of their sins, and the apprehensions of God's wrath. For, as he died for our sins, so did he rise again for our justification: As by his death we know that he suffered for sin, so by his resurrection we know, that the sins he suffered for were not his own. Had no man been a sinner, he had not died: and had he been a sinner, he had not risen again.

again. But dying for those sins which we commit, he arose from the dead to shew that he had discharged our debts, and made full satisfaction for our transgressions, and that we, believing in him, might obtain remission of our sins and the justification of our persons. "Who "then," as the Apostle argues, "shall "lay any thing to the charge of God's "elect? It is God that justifieth. Who "is he that condemneth? It is Christ "that died, yea rather, who is risen "again."

2dly. As Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we should walk in newness of life. Sin is the death, and lust the grave of the soul, wherein it lies buried and entombed, wrapt up in darkness, and devoured by those foul monsters, which it engenders within itself. We then, in imitation of Christ's resurrection, should, by the assistance of the Holy Spirit, quicken and revive our souls, raise them up to their primitive beauty and comeliness, and remove all those lusts and desires, which

obstruct

obstruct their re-entrance into a state of grace and holiness. For without this, be well assured, that we shall have no benefit in his death and passion. For he did not die to tolerate sin and wickedness, nor did he rise again to justify the ungodly: But he died and rose again for the discharge of those sinners only, who repent of their sins, and obey his holy laws. So that the mercies of this day, and the benefit of that Sacrament, if we do not crucify all our lusts, kill and mortify our most beloved vices, will only serve to enhance our guilt and increase our condemnation.

3dly. If Christ be risen from the dead, then may we be assured that we shall rise also; for this is what he has promised us, and what he has promised he is able to perform; since he who could do what is greatest, can certainly do what is least: He who could give life to himself, to his own dead body, can likewise give it to the bodies of others: He who was loosed from the pains of death, because it was impossible that he should be holden of it,

will

will be able also to ransom us from the power of the grave.

And now, how should this consideration comfort us for the loss of our departed friends, that they are not perished, but only fallen asleep, in order to be again awakened with great glory and perfection. How again should the assurance of our own resurrection arm us against the fears of death? How willing should it make us to lay down our heads in the dust; since after the victory, which the great Captain of our salvation has obtained for us, we may venture to look death in the face with the exulting language of Scripture, "Rejoice not against "me, O mine enemy; when I fall, I "shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the "Lord shall be a light unto me; Though "I moulder into dust, though after my "skin worms destroy this body, yet in "my flesh shall I see God, in this flesh "and this very body, which is now "united to my soul." The hour is coming, in which all that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of Man, and

and shall come forth: The trump of God shall no sooner sound, than the scattered particles of our corrupted bodies shall be gathered together, from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven, and the same body which was laid in the dust, shall again start up into life. But then it shall be made much more glorious and perfect: It is sown in corruption, it shall be raised in incorruption: it is now liable to pain, and sickness, and death, but when raised, it shall die no more; it shall be for ever young, and healthful, and as immortal as the soul itself. It is sown in dishonour, it shall be raised in glory: it is now vile and corruptible, subject to deformity and disease; but it shall be raised all-glorious and beautiful; it shall shine as the sun, and shall be fashioned as the glorious body of our blessed Saviour. It is sown in weakness, it shall be raised in power: it is now weak and impotent, wearied out by fatigue and labour, or bowed down by age and infirmity, but it shall be raised vigorous and active, having all its faculties enlarged with new

degrees of strength and power. "It is "sown a natural body, but it shall be "raised a spiritual body:" These bodies of ours, which are now kept from perishing by constant supplies of air and nourishment, and which often weigh down the natural activity of our minds, shall then have a principle of life within themselves, by which they will subsist, without the aid of foreign supports. In a word, they shall be so refined, and made so subservient to the operations of our better and nobler part, that they shall greatly contribute to the making our ideas more lively, our sensations more acute, and every faculty of our souls more vigorous and extensive. Such a glorious scene of things has the religion of Jesus laid open, and his resurrection from the dead assured us of!

What remains then, but that we approach that holy table, in obedience to the commands of our dying Master, with hearts overflowing with gratitude for all the mercies of our redemption; and more

particularly, because we are this day commemorating the resurrection of our Lord, which has sealed and confirmed to us all the rest, and which if it had never happened, our preaching would be vain, and your faith also vain. Let us be firmly resolved never to forsake or be ashamed of, never to be laughed or terrified out of the profession of that religion, which God has publicly owned to be his, by this, and so many other stupendous miracles. But, above all, let us take care to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour by all the graces and virtues of a godly and Christian life. If we do but receive the blessed Sacrament with such holy resolutions as these, together with a hearty sorrow for our past transgressions, we shall assuredly find from it both rest and comfort to our souls; and every time we thus receive it, it will give us a certain earnest and foretaste of those transcendent delights, which we shall one day enjoy in the mansions of the blessed, where all tears shall be wiped from our eyes, and sorrow and pain shall flee away;

away; where there is a fullness of joy, and pleasures which last for evermore.

To which happy state, may God, of his infinite mercy, bring us all, for the sake of that Saviour, who died for our sins, and rose again for our justification!

SERMON LXXIV.

GEN. xlv. 4.

I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt.

WERE we to look upon the holy Scriptures as containing nothing more than so many records of facts and mere historical collections, without considering them in their proper light, as invaluable repositories of high and heavenly truths, as complete systems of the most refined morality, and authentic registers of all the various dispensations of God to man; even such a low and partial notion of them could not but recommend them to the careful perusal and highest esteem of every wise and thinking man.

For they relate not only the actions of the great, the revolutions of kingdoms, and the fates of empires, from which many useful reflections may be drawn; such as the instability of all human greatness, and the absolute necessity of the practice of virtue to whole nations as well as individuals, both to the governors and the governed, for their mutual support and security; but they contain also many curious memoirs of particular families and persons, which every man may bring home to himself, and draw from them such observations as will be of the greatest use to him in the happy regulation of his conduct through all the changes and chances of this mortal life.

Such is the story of the adventures of the family of Jacob, as related in the book of Genesis: a story, in which we know not which we should most admire, the graceful simplicity with which it is told, the affecting strokes of tenderness and pity it abounds with, or the well-wrought scenes it displays of the extremities of joy and grief rapidly succeeding each other.

—In short, every tender sentiment is awakened, which can arise from the endearing relations of a brother, a son, and a father: the inmost workings of the human breast are made bare, and nature herself is exposed to view in unadorned and artless majesty.

To be fully convinced of this, we must have recourse to the holy page itself; since any other manner of relating the story, or any other words than those which are there made use of, would render the whole less beautiful and affecting. It will however be necessary, in order to the more easy application of it to my present purpose, to lay before you a faint sketch of its most material and leading parts.

The Patriarch Jacob, after having been exercised in the early parts of his life with a variety of evils, was in his more advanced years, blessed with a numerous offspring; to all of whom he was a fond and indulgent father. But there was one of them, Joseph, who had more particularly engaged his affections; not only

by his being the son of his most beloved wife, and the son of his old age, but also by the beauty of his person, the sprightliness of his genius, and the gentleness of his manners and disposition. These endearing circumstances had distinguished him from his brothers, by some peculiar marks of his father's favour and indulgence. His brethren, therefore, moved with envy by so excusable a partiality in an aged parent, and also by certain dreams which Joseph had related to them, in which God had revealed to him both his own future greatness and their subjection to him, entered into a most unnatural conspiracy to take away his life. And long it was not before an opportunity offered itself of executing their hellish purpose: for whilst they were feeding their father's flock in Shechem, Israel, with a fond anxiety for their welfare, called Joseph, and said unto him, "Go, I pray "thee; see whether it be well with thy "brethren, and well with their flocks, "and bring me word again;" little suspecting into what hands he had delivered him,—far more merciless than the rapa-

cious wolf or the devouring vulture. For no sooner did they see him approaching, but they said one to another, "Behold, "this dreamer cometh: come now, there- "fore, and let us slay him, and cast him "into some pit." But the risings of nature in two of his brothers prevented the others from carrying their horrid barbarity to its full extent: Reuben, by a well-meant stratagem, snatching him out of the jaws of an immediate death by their hands; and Judah, delivering him from a lingering and painful one, by prevailing on them to take him out of the pit into which they had cast him, and to sell him for a slave to some merchants, who were then passing by on their way to Egypt; by whom he was again sold to Potiphar, the Captain of Pharaoh's guard. Potiphar was soon so much charmed with the fidelity and prudence of his young slave, that he presently advanced him to be the overseer of his house, and trusted him so unreservedly, that, as it is very emphatically expressed, "he knew not "ought he had, save the bread which he "did eat."

Joseph

Joseph did not long enjoy this respite from his late misfortunes, before a new one overtook him; arising too from the same cause from which the former sprang, —his beauty and his virtue. The goodliness of his person so inflamed the eyes and mind of his mistress, that throwing aside the modesty of her sex, she openly solicits him to dishonour his master's bed. The answer he returned her upon this occasion deserves to be particularly recorded:—"Behold, says he, my master "wotteth not what is with me in the "house, and hath committed all that he "hath to my hand: there is none greater "in this house than I; neither hath he "kept back any thing from me, but thee, "because thou art his wife: How then "can I do this great wickedness, and sin "against God?"

This was an answer, which might have drawn a blush of shame and self-reproach into the cheek of female modesty; but it had no other effect upon this abandoned woman than, as has too often been observed in such cases, to change her disappointed

pointed lust into the keenest malice. She had found herself too weak to rob him of his virtue, and therefore resolved to rob him of his liberty, and, perhaps, of his life too; and for this purpose procures his imprisonment by laying a charge against him, which was just the reverse of truth. After a long confinement, the fame of his extraordinary and supernatural wisdom at length reached the ears of Pharaoh, who not only delivered him from prison, but also advanced him to be his Prime Minister, and the absolute dispenser of all his favours, observing him to possess many virtues deserving of so high a trust.

During this his unlooked-for elevation of fortune, the sons of Jacob were sent by their father, in a time of famine, to buy corn in Egypt; who, as all others that came upon the same errand, were of course introduced into the presence of Joseph. The difference of habit, the alteration which age had made in his countenance and stature, the place where they found him, and above all his present exaltation,

would

would naturally contribute as much to conceal Joseph from the knowledge of his brethren, as the sameness of their dress, their language, their number, their air and persons, would make them known to him, who had not left them till they were all at their full growth. But, in order to bring them to a just sense of their cruelty to him, and to extort from them a true account of the condition of their aged father and little brother, whom they had left behind, he suppresses, for the present, the struggles of nature and the yearnings of his bowels, speaks roughly to them, accuses them of being spies, puts them in ward for three days, and then dismisses them with an order to bring Benjamin to him; at the same time taking Simeon from them, and binding him before their eyes, as an hostage for their performance of what he required of them; concluding perhaps with great probability, that his father's fondness had been no less fatal to Benjamin, than it had like to have been to himself, by equally exposing him to the envy and cruelty of his brethren. Very natural and affecting is the reflection, which

which the treatment they met with extorted from their awakened consciences; "We are verily guilty concerning our "brother, in that we saw the anguish of "his soul, when he besought us, and we "would not hear: therefore is this distress "come upon us." No wonder then, that the heart of Joseph was here melted with pity and tenderness, that he was forced to turn himself from them, and weep!

Home they now return to their father, with the sad tale of their surprizing adventures, who, at last, though with extreme reluctance, consents to the hard condition required of him, to send back his beloved son Benjamin with them; but not without declaring at the same time, that if any evil should befall him, it would bring down his grey hairs with sorrow to the grave.

The sight of this beloved youth, the son of Joseph's own mother, was almost an over-match for the studied art of Joseph, and had well-nigh forced him out of his concealment. However, he commands

mands himself for the present, till he had fully obtained the ends he had proposed to himself in the feigned character he had assumed. He entertains them all at his table with a free and generous, and Benjamin with a distinguished, hospitality: But just before they were setting out on their return, he orders his silver cup to be conveyed privately into the sack of the youngest, then seizes him for the pretended theft, and, by way of punishment, demands him in bondage. Upon which trying occasion, how forcible is the plea of Judah in behalf of the supposed criminal! The passion and energy of which is greatly heightened, if we reflect on the near relation betwixt the pleader and the judge. With what humility and submission does he address himself to Joseph!— "O, my Lord, let thy servant, I pray thee, "speak a word in my Lord's ear, and let "not thine anger burn against thy ser- "vant; for thou art as great as Pharaoh." Thou art as great and powerful, as we are low and distressed; and we know, that we lie wholly at thy mercy, either to spare or punish thy servants! How beautifully then

does

does he recapitulate the circumstances of their story! How generous is his offer of redeeming his brother's liberty by giving up his own! But, above all, how affectingly does he describe the distress and anguish of Jacob their father; and how irresistible is his petition to Joseph, that he would not suffer him and the rest of his brethren, by returning without their brother Benjamin, to behold the evil they should bring on their father, and to be the unhappy instruments of bringing down his grey hairs with sorrow to the grave!

Here Joseph's passion grew too big for any farther disguise. He therefore reveals himself with all the expressions of the most ardent transport and tenderness. And, Oh! what a tumult of various passions,—joy, fear, hope, doubt, guilt, and shame, must at once arise in the breasts of his brethren, when those astonishing words sounded in their ears,—"I am Jo-"seph, your brother, whom ye sold in "Egypt!"—I am that innocent brother of yours, in whose blood ye were hardly withheld from imbruing your hands, and

to

to whom ye thought ye were very merciful, when ye doomed him to a miserable exile and slavery. I, who am now exalted so high above you, and from whose hands ye now ask and receive both life and liberty, am no other than your once-hated, once-envied, and persecuted brother; to whose cries ye once were deaf, when he asked no greater a boon at your hands, than that ye would spare his life.

The sight of their guilt, into which they had been so suddenly surprized, struck them with silence and amazement;—they were terrified at his presence, and could not answer him. But the generosity of Joseph's nature immediately relieves them from their confusion, and even makes a kind apology for their cruelty—"Be not "grieved, nor angry with yourselves, "that ye sold me hither; for God did "send me before you to preserve life."

Having thus imperfectly laid before you the outline of this affecting story, I shall now proceed to make such reflections and obser-

observations upon it, as may be of use to us in the conduct of our lives.

1st then, That the providence of God does not only interpose in the more important and general concerns of mankind, but descends also to the care of particular persons and their affairs, is the first reflection, which must suggest itself to every thinking man, from the story before us:—a truth, which can admit of no doubt, but with such low and narrow minds, as form their conceptions of the power, wisdom, and goodness of their Maker from the poor pittance of those perfections which they enjoy themselves; imagining, that an attention to such a complicated multiplicity of affairs, is either in itself impossible, or at least, would too much distract and fatigue him; or that the concerns of individuals are below his notice; as if any thing could escape the knowledge of an all-present, all-seeing eye; as if any difficulty could be an over-match for Omnipotence; or, as if the God and Father of us all could look upon any of his creatures as too inconsi-

derable for his care, when it is the pure effect of his goodness that they exist at all. "Can a woman forget her sucking "child, that she should not have compas- "sion on the son of her womb? Yea, "they may forget:" yet will not he forget, or forsake, even the very least of us, who are his offspring and the work of his hands.

But the most convincing arguments for a particular providence are drawn from matter of fact. A very slender acquaintance with the world and the history of mankind; nay, a few serious reflections on the many surprising turns, which most of us must have experienced in the course of our lives, will assure us beyond all possibility of doubt, that there is an overruling power, which frequently interposes in the affairs of individuals; producing good out of the worst of evils, and the least-expected events by the most unlikely means. Thus, in the story before us:—Who, that had seen Joseph in the hands of his merciless brethren, or had heard his cries in the pit, could have imagined

that

that these very brethren should one day come and bow themselves to the ground before him, as the arbiter of life and death to them; that he should become the support of them, their father, and the whole family: and who that saw this actually happening, could forbear looking up to God, as the first contriver of these wonderful changes, and acknowledging, that no other cause but that, which brought light out of darkness, could produce so much good out of so much evil?

And though there were particular reasons, why the Almighty should in such an extraordinary manner interest himself in the affairs of Jacob's family; because that was almost the only family amongst all the nations of the earth, which at that time believed in and worshipped the true God; and because the promised Messiah was to spring out of it; yet the same God is still both as able and willing to save to the uttermost those that come to him; and has declared, that no harm shall happen to them that love and fear him; that the very hairs of our head are all

numbered by him; that the very least and lowest of us are under his eye; and that all our concerns are the objects of his care, and that he can make every thing work together for our good: and though, for a small moment, he may seem to hide his face from us, and to forsake us, yet, in the end, he will bless us with everlasting kindness.

And hence we may learn, 2dly, the great folly of looking upon afflictions as judgments from heaven on those particular persons on whom they fall; a weakness to which too many rashly give way. They cannot see any calamity befalling their neighbour, but immediately they set themselves to work to find out some crying sin in the man, which has drawn down the wrath of God upon him in so signal and vindictive a manner. But, (whatever be the source of these reflections) how idle and impertinent are they? Since it is impossible for us to determine what are evils and what are blessings to particular persons. How many disappointments have in their consequences saved

saved a man from ruin, if not procured him some extraordinary advantages? How frequently do we see men gaining by their losses, and rising higher by their fall? How often have we repined at the dealings of God's providence with us, as harsh and severe, when, in reality, he has all the time been visiting us with mercy and loving-kindness. Who, that had beheld Joseph in any one of the scenes of his distress, could have helped pronouncing him a wretch indeed, equally forsaken of God and man? And yet we see, that every evil which befel him; the cruelty of his brethren; his slavery in Egypt; the false accusation of his master's wife; were all of them the foundations of his future honours, and as so many steps of that ladder by which he rose to his future glory and happiness.

We may farther observe, from a remarkable circumstance in the story, how greatly useful afflictions are in awakening the hardened sinner, and bringing him to a sense of his guilt. For, whilst men are lulled in ease and prosperity, and the

world smiles upon them; whilst health blooms on the cheek, and joy sparkles in the eye; they have but little inclination to admit such an unwelcome guest as a self-accusing conscience. They feel no bad effects from their vices, and therefore think it not worth the while to give themselves the trouble of so much as a thought about them. But when the evil days of adversity come upon them, when the storms of calamity blow hard and frequent, when sorrow rains her bitter drops upon their unsheltered heads, they have reason, perhaps, to look upon their sufferings as the fruit of their sins; and then do they begin to take a nearer view of their past conduct, and to behold their crimes in their naked and genuine deformity. Every aggravation of their guilt then presents itself to their minds; and the tormenting thought, that their misery is the work of their own hands, makes the remembrance of their sins grievous unto their souls, and the burden of them intolerable. And thus it was with Joseph's brethren: who, whilst they were safe and well in their father's house, did not appear

to

to have even the least remorse for the unnatural cruelty they had been guilty of; but, as soon as they thought their liberty and lives in danger by the well-feigned severity of Joseph, immediately their guilt stares them in the face; they become odious to one another and to themselves, and with one voice break forth into that frank but dreadful confession of their shame:—"We are verily guilty concern-" ing our brother, in that we saw the an-" guish of his soul, when he besought us, " and we would not hear: therefore is " this distress come upon us."

Again:—It is scarcely possible to go through this story without reflecting on the hateful nature of envy; how much it concerns our own peace and happiness to watch and suppress the first motions of this passion; since it is impossible to say to what lengths it may carry us, if we once give way to it. For here we see it breaking through the strongest ties of nature, and even engaging the children of a virtuous parent in a horrid confederacy against the life of an innocent brother.

At first we may observe, they kept their envy within some bounds, contenting themselves with displaying it in their words only and outward carriage towards Joseph:—"they hated him, and could not "speak peaceably to him;" but, by suffering it to keep possession of their hearts, it grew too violent to be controlled: the most powerful motives became weak and impotent; they were hardened against every tender sentiment, and seemed not to regard, or so much as even feel, the stings of conscience, the emotions of pity, or the endearments of fraternal affection.

The chain of this history will naturally lead us to reflect farther on the great unreasonableness, as well as dangerous consequences, of parents dividing their affection unequally among their children. That all such distinctions are highly unreasonable is undeniably evident; since all our children bear an equal relation to us, and therefore have an equal claim to our favour and regard. And that the consequences of them are dangerous appears

pears no less so from fact and experience. For we may observe, that by thus becoming strange to our own flesh, they generally become strange to us; their affections are alienated from us, and our authority over them is destroyed. By this method also, we introduce a kind of faction or schism in our own families; since those, whom we think proper to distinguish from the rest of our offspring by an extraordinary degree of regard, will scarce ever fail of being as much distinguished by the hate and envy of the rest of their brethren. And how far these passions may transport them, we may learn from the story before us. But even, though this partiality of ours should not produce such direful effects as are there recorded, yet it will at least weaken one of the best supports, and take away one of the greatest blessings of domestic life, the cordial friendship and affectionate unity of brethren among themselves; and also, by making us more remiss in the care of their education and the formation of their manners, will greatly contribute to their future miscarriages in life. And, in

in this case, it will become us to consider well in sober sadness, what horror and confusion of face will seize us at the last great day. How it will make our ears tingle, and our knees smite together, to be then reproached by these our neglected children, in some such language as this:—
" Behold, thou unnatural parent, the
" fruits of thy neglect of me! Hadst thou
" but bestowed upon me that portion of
" thy care and love, to which I was
" equally entitled with the rest of my
" brethren; hadst thou not withdrawn
" thy protecting hand, and left my un-
" sheltered innocence to fall an easy sa-
" crifice to temptation; hadst not thou
" driven me to despair and ruin by an ill-
" timed preference and partiality, which
" stung my soul with jealousy and rage,
" I had not now been condemned for
" ever to this place of torment! Cursed
" therefore be the Father which begat me,
" and the paps which I have sucked!"

It must be owned, that what I am now condemning is a fault to which even the best of men have been subject; but all parents

parents ought to strive against it, as they would against any other criminal passion. And the only case in which such a behaviour of a parent can admit of any excuse, is that of the patriarch Jacob, whose fondness for one of his sons was chiefly owing to the extraordinary virtue and duty he met with in Joseph, and the scandalous vices and disobedience, which his brethren had been guilty of. But, even in this case, great prudence is requisite in letting our other children see, that it is their vices only we are displeased at; and that by returning to their duty, they will certainly return to an equal share of our love and affection.

There is another circumstance in this story, which we cannot slightly pass over, as it evidently points out to us a remarkable difference between an honest and a vicious heart,—between a genuine virtue and the spurious resemblance of it. When Joseph was solicited by his master's wife to gratify her unlawful desires, he immediately makes her this generous answer: "Behold, says he, my master wotteth

" not what is with me in the house, and " hath committed all that he hath to my " hand: there is none greater in the house " than I: neither hath he kept back any " thing from me, but thee, because thou " art his wife: How then can I do this " great wickedness, and sin against God?" —Here we see, that the same argument which a base mind would have applied to itself for committing the evil, was to this truly brave and virtuous youth the strongest motive for forbearing it,—even that he could do it with impunity. A regard for this world, and a dread of the temporal inconveniences which may follow a detection, are to the greater part of mankind the only checks on their conduct; and, when these are removed, they seldom stick at any villany, which either the devil or their own corrupt hearts can suggest to them. But the truly virtuous man acts upon nobler motives: the inbred odiousness of vice is to him of infinitely more weight than the shame or resentment of a whole world; and, whilst he has no other witnesses to his actions than God and his own conscience, a regard for them strikes

him

him with a far greater awe than would arise from the presence and inspection of a million of other spectators and judges. In short, whenever he is tempted to depart from his duty, he will, like Joseph, suppress every rising lust by this awful reflection: "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"—a reflection which, if duly attended to, would certainly check that enormous and increasing depravity of adultery, which so strongly marks the present age, as to constitute a very material part of the employment of our Senate and our Courts of Judicature.

Lastly, we may consider the whole of this affecting history as a just emblem and representation of the life of a sincere Christian; who, in his passage through this world, will generally be exercised with as severe calamities as Joseph was, and will like him also be at last happily delivered out of them all. He will not perhaps meet with the same cruel usage from unnatural brethren, nor will his virtue and

chastity always expose him to the same undeserved sufferings; yet he will be forced to encounter a variety of other evils, equally perhaps distressing, and which will go as near his heart. He will see his fairest hopes, and his most flattering schemes of happiness, often baffled and disappointed. He will experience melancholy reverses in his fortunes; pains and diseases will macerate and afflict his body. He will feel the goading stings of envy; he will see the pointed finger of scorn; the chilling horrors of neglect will pierce his inmost soul. He will be robbed of his ease and peace of mind by malice and ill-nature, and the perfidy or ingratitude of those among whom he dwells. He will successively lose the most valuable of his friends, and the dearest of his relations. He will drop the unavailing tear of sorrow over his children when dead; or, what is infinitely worse, he will experience their ingratitude and disobedience when living, and have his grey hairs brought down with sorrow to the grave. Finally, he will be harassed by ten thousand other melan-

melancholy accidents, which no human wisdom can foresee or prevent.

Yet, though all this will probably happen, lift up your heads, ye sons and daughters of affliction, if ye in earnest believe that your Redeemer liveth, and shall stand at the latter day upon the earth. The man who has no religion can have no hope: he has no future prospect in heaven to console his present misery on earth: for to him death shall never be swallowed up in victory, nor mortal dust put on glorious immortality. But behold the day of your redemption draweth nigh, —that day when ye shall be delivered from all the troubles and follies of this vain life, and be rewarded with a happiness and satisfaction far superior to that which either Joseph or his father felt upon their being restored to each other. Ye shall be translated from this land of Egyptian darkness and slavery to your native country; ye shall come unto Mount Sion, unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company

find mankind ready enough to own, when not under the immediate pressure of any calamity; when they are surrounded with prosperity, and in no danger of a storm breaking upon them; that as the creatures and dependents of an all-wise and powerful Being, they are under an obligation to resign themselves to God's disposal; that, in whatever manner he pleases to regulate the affairs of this lower world, their duty is resignation to his will; as knowing that he ruleth over all, and that he can do what he pleases in the armies of heaven and amongst the inhabitants of the earth. But, God knows, this is too often only the language of the happy and fortunate. For, change the scene, and see the same persons under affliction, surrounded with a multitude of sorrows, smarting under pain, reduced to want and poverty, tenderly affected with the loss, or, what is more grievous, with the unkindness and treachery of friends; then is the great trial of submission, then is the hard struggle betwixt duty and the sense of what they feel. And if a man under these circumstances, can maintain

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SERMON LXXV.

LUKE xxii. 42.

Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me, nevertheless, not my will, but thine, be done.

A SUBMISSION to the divine will, in the various distresses and troubles of human life, is one of the most difficult, and yet at the same time one of the most necessary, duties of our holy religion; either, as it is the most convincing proof of our trust and confidence in God's goodness, or as it is the best foundation of that peace and tranquillity of mind, which is the true and only source of joy and happiness. And indeed in general we

cup from him, still maintained a most entire resignation to the divine will and pleasure, and made it the conclusion of his prayer, and the restriction of all his petitions, " Not my will, but thine, be " done."

That we may improve by so perfect an example, it may not be improper to consider it with regard to the several particular circumstances, which recommend it to our imitation as the highest instance of submission to the divine will; and then to subjoin the many advantages arising from this duty, as arguments and motives to the practice of it. Now, if we consider the life of the blessed Jesus from his first appearance in the world, we may justly observe, that he strictly fulfilled the emphatic prediction of the prophet Isaiah, who, in the midst of all the glorious things which he foretold of his future kingdom, expressly calls him, " a man of sorrows, " and acquainted with grief." For surely never any one was exposed to greater and severer trials, never any one bore them with such a calm and perfect resignation.

He

He came into the world in a mean and low condition, exposed to want and poverty; himself complaining, that "the "foxes have holes, and the birds of the "air have nests, but the Son of Man "hath not where to lay his head." His person was treated with scorn and contempt, and his actions were basely misrepresented. Even that unwearied beneficence, with which he went about doing good to the souls and bodies of men, had no other effect than to expose him to the slander and insolence, the malice and rancour of his enemies. If in great compassion and tenderness of soul he saith to the sick of the palsy, "Son, be of good "cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee," he is immediately called a blasphemer. If at any time, as the great friend and benefactor of mankind, he exerts himself in miracles of mercy and compassion, by a word healing their diseases and restoring men possessed to a right mind, instead of their grateful acknowledgments for such adorable instances of power and goodness, they give him no better character than that of a sorcerer, casting out devils by

Beelzebub, the prince of devils. If again employed in his Father's business, to seek and to save that which was lost, he converses with publicans and sinners, in order to reclaim them, he is immediately reviled as "a glutton and wine bibber, a "friend of publicans and sinners." This was the treatment the blessed Jesus met with from his first entrance into the world. And in what manner did he behave himself under the load of so much malice and ingratitude? How did he endure all this contradiction of sinners? Composed and undisturbed, answering all their reflections in a calm and mild language, still maintaining his charitable intentions of doing good to them that want it, and patiently submitting to every difficulty that attended him in the whole course of his duty; neither reviling, when he was reviled, nor threatening, when he suffered, but committing himself to him that judgeth righteously, whose will and pleasure it was, that he should be the most perfect pattern of patience and resignation.

This

This was the behaviour of the blessed Jesus, this the temper of mind, with which he bore the perverseness and ingratitude of the people in the course of his ministry; considering it as the whole business, nay rather the joy and pleasure of his life, to do the will of his Father, and to finish his work.

But if we attend him to the last scene of his afflictions, and consider the several circumstances that preceded and accompanied his death and passion, we may observe, that as never sorrow was like unto his sorrow, so never was there any patience and submission like that, which under so severe a trial, under the greatest pain and extremity of suffering, could still express itself in terms of the most perfect resignation, "Not my will, but "thine, be done."

After a life exposed to various indignities, the malice of his enemies at last proceeded to execute their final cruelty upon him. He was accordingly apprehended as a thief and a malefactor, was betrayed

by one disciple, deserted by all, accused by false witnesses, and condemned without crime, insulted by the most insolent expressions of scorn and contempt, scourged as a despised slave, thought worthier of death than the most notorious robber and murderer, and at last led to suffer the death of the cross; a death the most cruel and ignominious that could possibly be contrived for the vilest malefactors. And even whilst he was in the greatest extremity of pain, whilst he continued in that torturing suspension which prolonged the misery and pain of dying, to increase his torment, they gave him gall and vinegar to drink, and barbarously reviled him; whilst he expired in agonies, amidst the blasphemies and reproaches of his enemies.

And what then was his behaviour in this his last extremity? Oppressed and afflicted, he opened not his mouth, neither murmured nor complained at what he suffered, nor at those by whom he suffered; but gave up the ghost, praying for his murderers. Not that he was insensible

of

of his sufferings, or was unmoved with pain and trouble: No: in his nature he was as capable of suffering as any man ever was, had as quick and tender a sense of the miseries both of himself and others: He could weep over a sinful and devoted city: He could mingle his tears with a family of sorrow at the grave of Lazarus: But then, at the same time, he had a patience peculiar to himself, a constancy and firmness of mind, which supported him in the severest trials, and a perfect submission to the will of his Father. And hereby he became a proper and a most instructive example to all the sons and daughters of affliction, by setting before us a pattern of patience and resignation suited to the weakness and tenderness of mankind, in that he was exquisitely sensible of his sufferings, and yet bore them decently, expressing a great sense of pain without the least sign of impatience.

Come hither then, thou child of affliction, and in the multitude of thy sorrows, learn comfort from this great example: Thou

Thou that art always complaining, always murmuring at the dispensations of Providence, as if the hand of God was unreasonably severe towards thee, and thy afflictions were of so grievous a nature, as were never the lot of any but thyself. Look unto Jesus and consider his sufferings, and from thence smooth all thy passions, calm thy resentment against divine Providence, and resolve to submit patiently and chearfully to the severest of its dispensations.

Art thou attacked in thy reputation, and made the object of reproach and censure? Perhaps thou deservest it: or if thou dost not, why shouldest thou complain, and think thyself so very hardly dealt with, when thou considerest that he, who was perfectly innocent and unblameable in all the several parts of his conduct, was loaded with all the calumny that envy and malice could invent, and yet opened not his mouth in the least complaint, or shewed the least mark of an angry resentment?

Art

Art thou forsaken by thy friends, and deeply afflicted by the ingratitude of those, whom thou hast endeavoured to oblige by every act of kindness and generosity? Thy case indeed is afflicting and strikes home to the heart; when he that is as dear to thee as thy own soul becomes thy enemy and thy oppressor. But what canst thou suffer in this respect in the least degree answerable to what the blessed Jesus suffered; who came into the world upon a design of the greatest love and compassion to all mankind, and whose whole life was one continued scene of charity and affection to the bodies and souls of men, and yet was always exposed to the malice and ill-nature of those whom he had most obliged, betrayed by one of his own disciples, and in his last extremity deserted by all?

Once more. Art thou called to the severest trials, to suffer in the cause of virtue, to undergo the greatest miseries and afflictions of life, and at last to submit to a painful and ignominious death? Hard indeed is thy case, and great the temptation

tion to murmur and complain at thy lot. But consider, what are all thy sufferings and afflictions, when compared to those which the blessed Jesus underwent, when he bare our griefs and carried all our sorrows, when he was stricken, smitten of God and afflicted, and cried out in the anguish of his soul, "My God, my God, "why hast thou forsaken me?" Let this example therefore of the most perfect patience and submission be sufficient to silence all thy murmuring and impatience, to calm and compose thy spirit, and to teach thee the great duty of resignation, even under the severest of God's judgments, which thou art called to suffer in this world; when thou considerest that he, who knew no sin, the captain of our salvation, was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, the greatest instance of suffering, and at the same time the most perfect example of patience and submission.

But to proceed. The duty of resignation and submission to Providence amidst a multitude of sorrows, is not only thus enforced

enforced by the example of our blessed Saviour, but likewise recommends itself to us by the several advantages arising from this divine temper of mind. It was the great design of philosophy, and indeed very worthy it was of the study of the wisest men in the heathen world, to find out a suitable support and comfort to the mind of men under the various evils and afflictions of life. They felt that man was exposed to troubles and distresses of many kinds, and wanted all the arguments of consolation they could possibly think of, to keep him from sinking under them. And what then was the great remedy they applied? Why, some of them told him, that pain and affliction were not real evils, and therefore he ought not to be troubled with them. But what language was this to a man smarting under pain and affliction, who felt them to be real evils, and could not therefore help sinking under the load of them? A man at ease might please himself with such airy notions, and boast of having found out a certain remedy against the evils and miseries of life: But change the scene, and see him

in a fit of sickness, or under any great affliction, and you will probably hear him uttering the common groan of afflicted humanity, and the boasted philosopher lost in the suffering man.

Others tell you, that you are born to misery, and that affliction is natural and necessary to you, and therefore why should you complain of what you cannot help, of what always was and always must be the condition of your nature. Great comfort indeed to a man in acute pain to be told, that his case is helpless, and that he is fatally doomed to suffer! Can you say any thing more grievous to him, or which can be a surer cause of depression under great and stinging afflictions?

What method then shall the afflicted soul take, to procure to itself suitable relief and consolation? None so effectual, as trust and reliance upon God, a firm belief that we are under the guidance and direction of a powerful and just, a wise and good Being, without whose permission no power can hurt us, without whose direc-

direction no evil can befall us, and who in all his dispensations to the sons of men most effectually provides for the happiness of his creatures. This is the temper of mind, this the only consideration, which can alleviate the multitude of sorrows: The man who is under the influence of such a persuasion as this, will patiently receive evil at the hand of God as well as good, will resign himself entirely to his will, who he is assured loves us as well as we do ourselves, and better knows what is good for us than we ourselves do.

2dly. This temper of mind is not only a relief for the present, but also calms our fears and apprehensions for the future. For what can he fear, who has committed all his concerns to the care of a wise and good God, who resigns himself up entirely to his disposal, and in all events supports himself with this reflection, "It "is the Lord, let him do what seemeth "him good?" Whatsoever is brought upon him he takes chearfully, and he is patient in his low estate: Though distressed, he encourages himself in the Lord

his God: "Though the fig tree shall not "blossom, neither shall fruit be in the "vine; though the labour of the olive "shall fail, and the fields shall yield no "meat; though the flock shall be cut "off from the fold, and there shall be no "herd in the stalls; yet does he trust in "the Lord, and place his confidence in "the God of his salvation;" assuring himself that no affliction can befall him without the permission of the divine Being, on whose paternal care and affection towards him he relies in all the troubles and disappointments of life.

3dly. Another recommendation of this divine temper of mind is, that it tends to the improvement of our virtue. Afflictions and disappointments are the great methods, which God takes, to call us back to our duty and to fix us in our dependence upon him. The silent instruction of reason and true wisdom, or the still voice of conscience, are little attended to in the tumult and hurry of our passions. If therefore the judgments of God did not now and then rouse us to reflection,

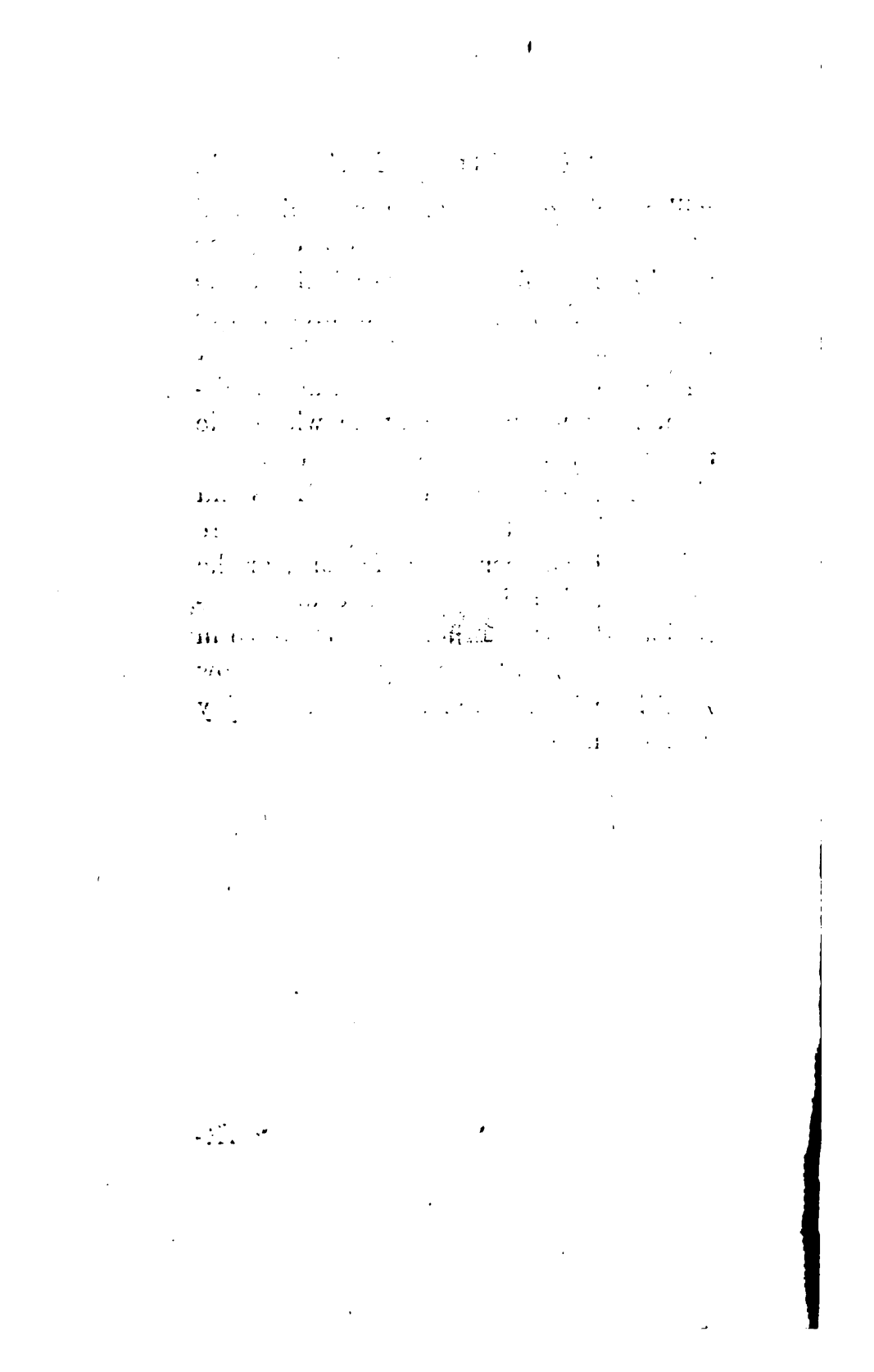
flection, the inhabitants of the world would entirely neglect the ways of righteousness. The Almighty therefore, mercifully severe, in pity to mankind finds it necessary to call them to a state of suffering: And if we then make the best use of the evils and afflictions which befall us, and bear them as we ought, we ourselves may do a great deal to turn them to our benefit and advantage, to the healing the disorders of the mind, and the improvement of our virtue. Why therefore should we repine and murmur at those things, which may prove so beneficial to us, if it be not our own fault, which tend to our good and the increase of our happiness, which put us in possession of the invaluable treasure of a virtuous mind, that good part, which cannot be taken from us, and which so long as we possess, we are sure of the favour of God and the countenance of heaven, which alone are sufficient to make the most afflicted condition happy?

Lastly, As patience and submission to the divine will tend to the improvement of our virtue in this world, so they exalt

us to a higher degree of happiness in another. The Psalmist said of old, that this was one of the comforts of God which refreshed his soul: "I should utterly have fainted, but that I believe verily to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living." And surely it is no small alleviation of affliction to reflect, that let the multitude of our sorrows be as great and as heavy as they can, they cannot always last; that there is a time coming, when pain and sorrow shall be no more; when we shall be far removed out of the reach of the strife of tongues and the treachery of false friends; that how troublesome soever our passage through this world has been, heaven will be at last a sure sanctuary and retreat from all our sorrows. But when we consider, that the same God, who for wise ends and purposes has made our condition in this world subject to a variety of changes and chances, has at the same time promised an endless happiness to those who bear them with patience and a hearty submission to his will, and has expressly declared, that these light afflictions which are but for a moment,

will

will purchase a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; how does the mind of man feel itself raised above the concerns of this lower world, prepared to receive the strokes of our heavenly Father with a filial reverence and dutiful submission, fully persuaded that he who made the world is best able to govern it, that the next life will make up all the rubs and inequalities of this, and that the more grievous have been our afflictions, or the more remarkable our patience and resignation, the brighter will be our crown in that kingdom, where every tear of sorrow shall be wiped away, and peace and joy shall reign for evermore.



SERMON LXXVI.

ROM. ii. 28, 29.

For he is not a Jew that is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh. But he is a Jew which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men but of God.

THE Apostle having laid this down as the foundation of his discourse to the Romans, that the gospel of Christ was the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; he proceeds in the next place to prove the proposition by shewing that neither Jew nor Gentile, by their several observations of the law of nature

and the Mosaic dispensation, could lay claim to that righteousness whereby a man is justified, or stands just and righteous in the sight of God.

He begins with the Gentiles, and shews their incapacity of this justifying righteousness, which alone can find acceptance, from the abuse of those common principles concerning God and his nature, which were manifested to them by the light of their own reason. By "holding "the truth in unrighteousness," that is, by wickedly suppressing those natural notions concerning God and their neighbour, they justly deserved the wrath of God to be revealed against their ungodly and unrighteous method of life.

"By the things that are made" they might easily have collected the eternal power and Godhead of him who is the invisible Creator, and thereby deduced their obligations to a dutiful obedience: so that upon that account they were without excuse; in that they changed the truth of God into a lie, and, by a preposterous inver-

inversion, worshipped the creature more than the Creator, who is the God of blessedness and eternity.

Having laid open the inexcusable enormities of the Gentile sinner, he next exposes the egregious folly of the boasting Jews; by declaring, that notwithstanding those peculiar privileges, in which they placed their whole confidence and glory, they were in equal guilt with the Gentiles, and stood as much in need of the righteousness of God as the Gentiles did. Those peculiar marks of distinction, by which they were known from the rest of mankind, did not supply the want of that inward moral rectitude which they ought to have laboured after, that they might, in the truest and noblest sense, have been the chosen Israel of God.

To be the people of God, only by an external shew of religious duties, does by no means accord with the true intent and design of the great and glorious Author of it. It is the spirituality of devotion, and not the circumstances of any outward

act, which can recommend us to God's favour and acceptance.

This was the fatal mistake of the Jews, that they carried their prospects no farther than the outward appearances of things, and confined their researches to the surface of religion only. They were scrupulously exact in all the minutiæ of ceremonial performances, that they might be thought most strict observers of the divine law, whilst they omitted things which were of far more weighty, even of eternal, consequence. To this their error the Apostle opposes himself, and expressly contradicts their false reasonings, by telling them, "That he is not a Jew which "is one outwardly; neither is that cir-"cumcision, which is outward in the "flesh," the true circumcision which God primarily requires. "But he is a Jew, "who is one inwardly," who is thoroughly purified from all gross and corrupt affections; and true circumcision is that of the heart, which disposes to the truth and sincerity of worship. And this being in the spirit and not in the letter, the due

praise

praise comes from God, who is the discerner of our thoughts; and not from men, who are wholly incapable of passing judgment on the inward frame and disposition.

Were this false reasoning confined to the Jews alone, it would be no part of the duty of a preacher of the gospel of Christ to encounter it. But sad experience too well evinces, that it extends itself also to a large portion of the modern professors of Christianity, who shelter their want of inward purity and devotion under the same flimsy pretences, which served the Jews of old as a cloak for their hardness and impenitence.

The Jews knew that they were the chosen people of God, distinguished from all other nations as having the Almighty for their immediate king and governor. And for this reason they concluded, that it was impossible he should reject them, or turn the stream of his affection to any other people. Their being the seed of Abraham they vainly fancied was a demonstration

monstration to them of their standing right in the sight of God.

And this is a language which too many Christians adopt, however unwarrantably, to their own use and service. They have embraced the evangelical doctrine of life and immortality; and, because they believe, they fondly think that they have eternal life. They forget the genuine characteristic of a disciple of Christ, which is obedience and a sincere regard to the laws of his gospel. Hereby, says he, shall all men be satisfied of the truth of your profession that you are my disciples, if you are careful to maintain a purity of heart, and a firm obedience in outward life. All other pretensions to Christianity are false and unsafe: You may call me Lord and Master; but, so long as you neglect the great duties of justice and charity, according to the tenor of my everlasting gospel, ye cannot be my subjects. It is he that feareth God and worketh righteousness, who is my beloved and truest friend. Christians are called indeed of God; but then they are called by righteous-

righteousness unto God. It is but part of their happiness that they know: it is in the sincerity of their obedience alone that they can find a perfect happiness in his favour. Peculiar privileges, without peculiar circumspection in conduct, will only display more apparent folly here, and greater reason for condemnation hereafter.

2dly. The Jews magnified themselves very much on account of the law, which was given to them by Moses. They thought that the observance of it was so pleasing to God, that they should, by a punctual discharge of this part of their duty, be accepted by him, and be accounted righteous before him.

And is not this the case of many at this day? They profess the highest veneration for the sacred mysteries of religion; they allow the holy Scriptures to be a system of excellent truths, calculated for the happiness of the whole man in both worlds. They yield likewise an obedience to the rules which concern outward life, that they

may make a fair appearance in the estimation of the world, and recommend themselves to the favour and esteem of their fellow-creatures. And this they conceive to be the full import of that glorious gospel, which requires truth and purity in the inward man.

3. The Jews gloried much in their temple. They thought that God had fixed his residence there; and that the stately beauty of the place would engage his constant presence.

And this is a lively representation of a clamorous multitude in the present age, who please themselves with the delusive cry of—The temple of the Lord! The temple of the Lord! The sacred glory of Jerusalem's walls!—Nor is this the peculiar property of any one set of people: for there are some to be found in every denomination of Christians, who have a tincture of this false reasoning, and who think that they have a temple of their own, in which the Lord delighteth to dwell. Hence these sacred fabrics, these vene-

venerable monuments of antient piety, are deserted; and the new-fangled tabernacles and little Zoars of modern enthusiasm are filled with the deluded followers of illiterate mechanics or tradesmen, transferred by a strange kind of metamorphosis from the shop or shop-board to the pulpit. But how vain and foolish is it to build the hopes of salvation on the magnificence of a wall; or, as others do, on the seeming greater sanctity of this or that party: as if a material composition could infuse a principle of piety and sincerity; or the religion of our neighbours be equivalent to that inward holiness, which we ought to have ourselves. The lustre of another man's religion can never be so much reflected upon us, as to make us qualified subjects for the kingdom of glory. As well might we expect the oil in the lamp of the wise virgins to supply the deficiences of the foolish ones, and gain them admission to the marriage, when the bridegroom cometh. It is therefore the greatest cheat of reason to build our hopes of happiness upon such false and precarious foundations. It is a sober, righteous, and

godly

godly life alone, which can prepare us for Heaven; and all other dependences are so many idle delusions and baseless presumptions. If holiness and sincerity to the Lord be inscribed on the heart, it is of secondary consequence only where the knee bows itself to God; but if there be an immoral conduct in the life, not all the pomp of aspiring structures; not all the fancied superiority of devotion in this or that party, can refine the soul, or elevate it one degree towards Heaven.

If then it be clear from the whole tenor of scripture, that repentance, faith, and new obedience can alone qualify us for eternal happiness, may we not justly ask, whence is it, that so many who call themselves Christians, overlook these essential qualifications, and rest satisfied with the external forms and ordinances of the religion they profess?

To this inquiry we may answer in general, that this delusion arises from a want of right notions concerning God and religion. God is a spirit, and will be worshipped

shipped in spirit and truth. The design of the religion of Jesus, and indeed of all true religion, is to make us acquainted with God, and to demonstrate our love to him by a train of inward as well as outward piety: that is, the outward profession must always be attended with pure and holy dispositions, and a sincere dedication of the heart and all the affections to God. Religion, I mean pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father, proposes to reform our natures, and to exalt them to their original glory of being like unto God. Now this can never be effected without the circumcision of the heart, in the spirit, by cutting off and destroying every thing, which sets itself up in opposition against God.

To avoid the trouble therefore of this total change of principle and manners, which constitutes true religion, many are willing to go a more compendious way to work, and to substitute something in its place more reconcileable to flesh and blood, that is, to the corrupt and depraved tendencies of natural inclination. They

They persuade themselves, that a few transient acts of outward devotion constitute the whole of true religion. They can join in the assembly of the saints, and lift up their hands to the Almighty in prayer, at the same time that they are full of guilt, which perhaps at the very instant is crying to Heaven for vengeance. There is no man so wholly dedicated to the works of the devil, but that he can find time to shelter all his abominations under a shew of external duty, and hide all his sins under the sacred mantle of religion. Such men therefore will never complain that it is a weariness to serve the Lord, when it may be done at so easy a rate. The inward horrors of a truly convicted soul, the terrible apprehensions of an offended God upon the commission of sin, a constant watchfulness over a deceitful heart, are occurrences in the Christian life, about which they have no knowledge or concern. They can easily fast twice in the week, and give a pittance of alms to the poor; and then, in great serenity of mind, say to their souls, that it shall be well with them. But let such

men

men know, that as this is a religion which does not make them like God, it will assuredly fail in the end of bringing them to God.

Still however they think, that this is enough to gain them a reputation in the world, and to promote the interests of it. And this is the whole desire of many, who prostitute religion to the baseness of their worldly designs, and make use of it as a medium to their advancement. They practise just so much of it as serves to represent them in an acceptable view to their fellow-creatures; and the rest they leave for such as have a strength of mind equal to the whole of a Christian's labour. They have the art of making a division in the several duties of religion, and of selecting such as will set them in the fairest point of view to those who are around them.

In fact they find an absolute necessity of some external profession; because from this their honesty in their worldly transactions is often estimated, and conse-

quently an enlargement of their interests is promoted. Few persons care to have an intercourse with the avowed enemies of religion; because there is not so much as the shadow of the fear of God before their eyes: and it cannot reasonably be expected, that those who are just to God in nothing, should be disposed to practise much justice among men. If they will not give unto God the debt of grateful acknowledgment which is his due, it is not very probable that they will give unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's.

This then is the religious policy of these men; this is their regard to the solemn truths of the divine records. As far as the service of God influences their worldly concerns, so far will they wait upon him in the way of his own appointment; but beyond this their religion will not carry them a single step.

Again; There are others who are willing that a mere external profession should comprehend the whole of their duty, and therefore reason themselves into a belief that

that it does so; thus perverting the word of God, and making it of none effect.

Such is the wisdom of the world, that it can transform the true nature of things; make that to be religion which is only the bare resemblance of it, and true, genuine, vital religion, to be the creature of mere fancy and delusion.

And indeed, did religion expire with life, and the effects of it terminate in the grave, such reasoning would prove, perhaps, the best philosophy. But the certainty of a future existence, and the rewards which are to be differently dispensed according to the difference of men's behaviour in this life, clearly demonstrate the foundation on which these men build, to be all hay and stubble, which will not be able to endure the fiery trial. The godliness therefore which they profess, may be profitable for the present life, but cannot be so for that which is to come. They draw nigh unto God with their mouths, and honour him with their lips, but their hearts, the center of all true re-

ligion, are far from him: therefore shall their portion be far from eternal happiness at the great day of account and retribution. For God will never accept the surface of religion for the subtance, or reward the washing of the outside of the cup or platter. They who hope for his divine favour, must wash their hands in innocency; must purge their hearts and consciences from dead works; and endeavour to form themselves into a resemblance of the divine perfections.

St. Paul, in his usual strong and emphatic language, expresses that change of principle which must take place in the breast of every true believer, by the comprehensive phrase of his becoming a new creature:—"For in Christ Jesus," says he, "neither circumcision availeth any thing, "nor uncircumcision, but a new crea-"ture." By which we are to understand our regeneration; our being renewed by the Holy Ghost; and an entire change in the whole man. Old things must be done away, and all things must become new. And this change must not consist in mere Phari-

Pharisaical observances, which terminate in outward washings and purifications, but it must be a real and inward change, as inward as the soul itself, which will lead us to dedicate ourselves, our souls, and bodies to the service of God.

The considerations which move a natural man to the performance of religious acts are fetched from outward things; so that his religion continues no longer than the pleasure or views of advantage, which first gave birth to it. But the principle which animates a true Christian is an inward principle, which in its first motion is towards God, and which prompts him to do all things to the honour of God. All his services are kindled with a fire from Heaven. He considers what it is that stamps a value upon all his actions, and finds that they are good or evil, according as the fountain from which they proceed is pure or corrupted. He takes care therefore to purify and cleanse his heart; on the right government of which depend the issues of life or death eternal.

The two great springs of action in the divine life are faith and love.

Indeed faith is the immediate source of all spiritual life and motion; it is the fundamental grace upon which all others grow. From this a true Christian believes in the precepts of the gospel as a sacred rule, by which he is to form and guide all his measures: by this he believes in the promises of the word, as powerful incentives to obedience; and by this he believes in the Great Mediator, as the sole ground of his approbation with God.

And whilst faith thus directs his belief, divine love will prompt and influence all his actions. A true Christian does not perform his duty merely from the fear of hell, or for the sake of reputation and worldly interest; but, his delight being in God, he is carried towards him with the fervency of desire. This spiritual affection enlivens all his devotional exercises, and inspires his soul with a vigour, which suffers not his aspirations after Heaven to flag. And whilst others serve

God

God from a love to themselves, or avoid sin from experience of its destructive tendency to their tranquillity, their health, or their property; he loves the one from a deep sense of his divine perfections, and flees from the other from a conviction of its odious and debasing nature in the sight of God. He knows that he was not made for himself, but to shew forth the praises of his great Creator: therefore all that he intends or does, he ultimately refers to the glory of God, the great center of all perfection.

From what has been said we may, in the first place, clearly see the folly of the worshippers of the Church of Rome, who make a great part of their religion to consist in external acts; in the sacrifice of the mass, in corporal austerities, in a veneration for the relicks of departed saints, and in laborious pilgrimages to their shrines and sepulchres.

But all this, in truth, is nothing better than to spend their time and strength for nought. The voluntary stripes of the de-

luded devotee may macerate and afflict the body, but it is by the stripes alone of the Redeemer that the wounds of the soul can be cleansed and healed. How will therefore the poor mistaken bigots of the Church of Rome be surprized to find, that amidst all their holy rigors and afflictive penances, they have been sowing the wind and limning the water? How will they stand astonished at the great day of account, to be accosted by him whom they have served with such devotional mockery with this solemn question,—Who hath required these things at your hands? The religion which I demand of you does not consist in outward expressions. You may tread my courts, whilst at the same time you may make a reserve of your hearts for some more ignoble employ. But the religion I require, and which only I will remark to your advantage, is, that you draw nigh unto me with a true and hearty repentance for all your sins, with a firm faith in my promises, with a sincere love to me, and a generous concern for my glory; without which, you only offer a dead carcass instead of a living sacrifice. You trifle with

with your Creator, and do a manifest disservice to your own souls: you are far from acting agreeably to my holiness and purity, and you are only laying up in store for the time of dreadful account, when the portion of the hypocrite shall be yours for ever and ever.

2dly. From what has been said we may clearly see the excellency of the Holy Scriptures, by which we are guarded from error, and informed how to worship God in an acceptable manner.

In these divine writings there is an ample discovery of those qualifications, which are necessary to make our services acceptable to God, and advantageous to ourselves. In the 24th Psalm we have a lively character of a true worshipper; where the Psalmist, having first asserted and proved God's power and his dominion over mankind, proposes the important question,—How God is to be worshipped, in order to obtain his favour and blessing? "Who shall ascend into the hill of the "Lord? And who shall stand in his holy "place."

"place." And in the following verse he gives this clear and decisive answer:— "He that hath clean hands and a pure "heart, who has not lift up his soul unto "vanity nor sworn deceitfully. He shall "receive the blessing from the Lord, and "righteousness from the God of his sal-"vation."

In which words it is observable, that David, though himself a Jew, does not draw the characteristics of a sincere and acceptable worshipper from his own nation, or his being the son of Abraham, or from the costly observance of those rites and ceremonies, in which a great part of the Israelites pleased themselves, but from the performance of those duties which are of a moral, spiritual, and eternal nature, and which the Jews were ever too ready to despise and neglect.

It is a vain thing to call Abraham our father, unless we truly repent and bring forth fruits meet for repentance: the bare privilege itself is of no consequence without inward obedience. And in like manner,

to name the name of Christ is not Christianity, but to depart from all iniquity: this is the only acceptable profession of Christ's holy religion.

It is of little consequence to ask, whether our fathers worshipped in Mount Gerizim or at Jerusalem: for the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship him. Since the kingdom of Heaven hath come unto us, all ritual services are vanity and nothing. God is a spirit, and will not be satisfied with sensible things, but requires a spirituality in worship proportionable to the excellence of his nature. The happiness proposed to us is of a spiritual nature, and the service which qualifies for it must be of the same kind.

What remains then, but that we carefully inquire; and by inquiring we shall undoubtedly understand what the will of the Lord is, with respect to the whole of our duty towards him. And let us diligently

conform

conform ourselves to the laws of his appointment. Let us not make a boasting of the law, when by breaking the law we dishonour God. Let us depend upon the Lord Jesus Christ alone for salvation, and most solemnly renounce all confidence in the flesh The glorious privileges of the gospel dispensation, without purity of heart, will only serve to aggravate our condemnation at the great day. The brighter the light which conducts to eternal life and happiness, the greater will our condemnation be, if we refuse to follow this leading star. The gospel is a light which penetrates the heart, which searches the hidden man, and makes us beautiful and glorious within. All outward acts of devotion are only circumstantial parts of religion, which indeed may denominate us good in the sight of men, but the essence of true religion is confined to the soul, and is only visible to that God, who searcheth the heart and trieth the reins of the children of men. Remember then, that though you may witness a seeming good profession before many brethren, and your veneration for the public institutions

tutions of heaven may make your light shine before men; yet this is only a false lustre, without an inward reverence for God and the things of God. It is a flame, which will ere long go out into everlasting darkness and horror. Consider the spirituality of that divine service which is in heaven: how the blessed company of angels and the spirits of just men made perfect have their souls swelled with joy and gladness, when they are worshipping and adoring their Almighty Creator; and that you hope one day to be a member of that glorious society, and to join with them in their everlasting songs. But this you cannot be without religion: for where there is no religion, there can be no prospect of immortal glory above; and, what is worse, where there is no hope of happiness, there must be a certainty of misery and confusion of face. For, unless we will make God a liar, open wickedness and counterfeit piety must alike terminate in everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power.

SER-

SERMON LXXVII.

2 Sam. xii. 21—23.

Then said his servants unto him, What thing is this that thou hast done? Thou didst fast and weep for the child, while it was alive: but, when the child was dead, thou didst rise and eat bread.—And he said, While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept: for I said, Who can tell whether God will be gracious to me, that the child may live?—But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.

THERE are many particulars in the history of David, which will suggest useful matter of reflection to all sorts of men; to the greatest saint, as well as to the

the greatest sinner. The former may learn, from the fall of a man of such eminent virtues, to be humble and modest, diffident of their own strength and integrity, and always upon their guard. The latter may be encouraged, from the forgiveness he met with, after having been guilty of the worst of crimes, humbly to hope for mercy themselves, provided they do but imitate him in the sincerity of their repentance. And all men whatsoever have in him a most glorious pattern of true piety and devotion, and of a most fervent zeal for the honour of the Almighty; which were the qualities that entitled him to the distinguished character of the "Man after God's own heart."

Of his piety we have a remarkable instance in my text and the preceding verses; from which it appears at the same time, that this virtue was in him perfectly solid and genuine, guided by the best principles of truth and reason. The history, in brief, is this. The prophet Nathan had been sent by God to denounce his anger against David for the adultery and murder

murder of which he had been guilty, in the case of Uriah the Hittite. And though, upon his repentance, God was pleased to spare the life of the offender himself, yet he declares that the child, which David had by Bathsheba, after she became his lawful wife, should surely die. Accordingly we read, that the Lord struck the child, and it was very sick. Upon which David, who was always a most fond and tender parent, besought God for the child, and fasted, and lay all night upon the earth; humbly hoping that God would hear his prayers, and revoke the sentence which he had passed. But, it came to pass on the seventh day, that the child died. And the servants of David, judging of him from their own notions, and what they had observed of the conduct of others in like cases, feared to tell him that the child was dead: for they said, "Behold, while the child was yet "alive, we spake unto him, and he would "not hearken unto our voice; how will "he then vex himself, if we tell him that "the child is dead? But when David saw "that his servants whispered, he perceived

" that the child was dead: therefore he " said unto his servants, Is the child " dead? And they said, He is dead. " Then David arose from the earth, and " washed and anointed himself, and " changed his apparel, and came into the " house of the Lord and worshipped:" that is, in other words, laid aside the tokens of his grief, and attended, as usual, the public worship of God. Upon which his servants, struck with a behaviour so contrary to their expectations, expostulate with him in the words of the text; " What " thing is this that thou hast done? Thou " didst fast and weep for the child, while " it was alive: But, when the child was " dead, thou didst rise and eat bread."

From David's behaviour on this occasion, I shall make it the business of the present discourse to draw some reflections, which will be of use to ourselves, either under those general afflictions of human life, to which we are all in turns exposed, or, more particularly, under the same, or a like calamity with David's, to which we all of us shall probably be one day

called; and for which therefore we all of us ought to be fortified and prepared.

And 1st. We may learn from him, what is the best and wisest course we can take under any sort of affliction: namely, that like him, we should beseech the Lord, that we should fast, and weep, and pray. This was his constant practice in all his troubles: "When I am in heaviness," says he, "I will think upon God; when "my heart is vexed, I will complain unto "to him. I will pour out my complaint "before him, and shew him my trouble."

And this practice of his is certainly agreeable to our natural notions of God. For, to whom else should we apply in the day of our distress, than to the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort?

Prayer likewise is a means of God's own appointing, and therefore certainly the best means we can use of obtaining his favour and assistance. Thus our Lord directs us: "Ask, and it shall be given "you; seek, and ye shall find." Thus

likewise St. Paul: "Let your requests be "made known unto God." And so St. James: "Is any among you afflicted? "Let him pray." And again he assures us, that "the effectual fervent prayer of "a righteous man availeth much."

We may learn farther from the example of David, that we are only to pray for any blessing, whilst things are yet in suspence, and there is nothing contrary to the ordinary course of nature in the petitions we make: But, when all is over, and we cannot be relieved without a miracle, it is highly improper and presumptuous to beg of God, that he would change the established order of his Providence in our behalf. David, whilst the child was alive, besought God for him: For there was nothing miraculous in his request: it was no unprecedented thing that a sick child should recover: and therefore he might hope, that God would be gracious unto him, and hear his prayer. But, when the child was actually dead, as he himself reasons, "Wherefore should I fast? Can "I bring him back again?" And, though there

there was something particular in this case of David, namely, that the prophet of the Lord had assured him that the child should die, yet, as he well knew that God might, if he pleased, revoke any of his threats before they were executed; especially as there was generally a tacit proviso annexed to them, that those against whom they were denounced did not repent, (as in the case of Hezekiah; the city of Nineveh, &c.) so he humbly hoped, that his prayers and tears might turn away the wrath of the Almighty, and prevail on him to spare that life, which he had threatened to take away. And, thus likewise, we may very lawfully pray to God, to free us from any evil or calamity, from which he has often been pleased to deliver the sons of men. Or, again, we may deprecate any judgment which he has threatened to our sins; provided we use at the same time all the proper means which God has appointed, and do all in our power to free ourselves from the evil we groan under, or to avert the judgment we dread.

But, on the other hand, to beg of God to work a miracle for us, such as the bringing our dead friends to life again, or any thing else, which is as much out of the course of nature; or, for example, to desire him to relieve us, either in sickness, or in poverty, whilst we refuse to use that temperance which is necessary to preserve our health, or that diligence and industry, which are the natural methods of supplying our wants: Or lastly, to pray that God would not inflict upon us any of those judgments, which he has denounced against our sins, without our repenting of and forsaking them; in all these cases, our prayers are only vanity and folly, and in most of them, they become an abomination to the Lord, and will be charged to the account of our sins.

Such are the reflections we may draw from David's conduct, under the general afflictions of human life. Let us now see what instructions we can derive from it, under circumstances more immediately similar to his own.

1st. Then

1st. Then, Do we fear to lose a beloved child, or any other near and dear friend? We may, like David, without offence fast and weep, and earnestly beseech God, that he would mercifully spare them, and continue them a longer blessing and comfort to us. But here it may be proper to observe, that if the tears we shed be occasioned solely by the grief and anxiety we are under on account of our child or friend, though there be nothing displeasing to God in them, whilst they are moderated by reason, as being the natural expressions of those tender passions which he has implanted in us, yet there is nothing meritorious, nothing of God or religion in them, and therefore nothing can be expected from them. They may give a vent to our sorrow, but can do nothing towards removing the cause of it, nothing towards procuring the favour of the Almighty. The tears, which will move him to help us, are those alone, which are shed for our sins. We must, with David, not only weep, but we must also fast and pray. We must weep for our iniquities; we must confess and bewail our wicked-

ness, and acknowledge ourselves to be dealt with much better than we have deserved. It is from such a godly sorrow only, that we are to expect any success to our prayers; it is from this only, we can have any hope, that God will be gracious unto us, and that our child, or our friend, may live.

2dly. We may learn from David's example, how we ought to behave under the still more trying circumstances of the actual loss of a beloved child, or any other person, who is very near and dear to us.

With regard to the particular case of David, it may be observed, that though the loss of children is a loss which is often born the hardest of any, yet, if rightly considered, there is no just reason why it should be so; because there are so many grounds of comfort to alleviate it: such as, that they are taken from the evil to come, in a state of innocence: that if they had done well in the world, the pleasure we should have received from them would have been more than balanced by the

the thousand anxieties we should have felt for them; but that if they had done ill, they would have brought down our grey hairs with sorrow to the grave: and above all, that God has provided for them so much better than ever we could have done. We may presume that David reasoned in this manner in the case before us: For we read, that as soon as he knew the child was dead, he arose from the earth, and washed and anointed himself, and changed his apparel, and came into the house of the Lord and worshipped: "then "he came into his own house, and when "he required, they set bread before him, "and he did eat:" plainly shewing by all these signs, that he had now put an end to his grief, recovered his usual frame of mind, and fully resigned himself to God's holy will and pleasure. And in the same manner should we act in the like circumstances, drying up our tears, betaking ourselves to the duties of our respective stations, and submitting to the present dispensation of Providence with meekness and patience; knowing full well into whose hands we are fallen, and how much

much better he can judge what is good for us, than we can for ourselves. I own, this is such a happy composure of mind, as few persons are capable of attaining; indeed, none but those, who have a true greatness of soul, whose reason is superior to their passions, and above all, who have a strong and lively sense of religion upon their minds. Thus, we find the servants of David, concluding him to be like other common men, feared to tell him that the child was dead: "For they said, Behold, "while the child was yet alive, we spake "unto him, and he would not hearken to "our voice: how will he then vex him-"self, if we tell him that the child is "dead?" But, though no man had ever a more tender affection for his children than David had, yet, as no man likewise had a more fervent love of God, so his piety and submission to the will of God prevailed over all worldly ties and engagements, and he truly fulfilled that evangelical precept, "He "that loveth father or mother, son or "daughter, more than me, is not worthy "of me." And so we likewise, the greater hold the principles of religion have upon

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our minds, the more chearfully shall we acquiesce under all God's dispensations, and the more ready shall we be to part with our dearest friends, whensoever he shall be pleased to call them to himself.

And we shall do this the more readily, if we reflect, thirdly, on the reason which David gives for ceasing to grieve any longer, when the child was actually dead: "Wherefore should I fast? Can I bring "him back again?" Or dare I presume to hope, that the Almighty will work a miracle for my sake? And, who is there amongst us that can pretend to expect a greater favour from God than he did? Must we not see the vanity of all our repinings in such a case as this? That they will much sooner bring us down to the grave, than recall our friends out of it. However, it must be owned, that if no other reason could be given for our ceasing to grieve for our departed friends than this, that our grief cannot bring them back again, we might justly reply with Augustus, upon the same occasion, "it "is for that very reason I grieve." For, what

what can be a greater subject for our grief, than that we have for ever lost our friends, beyond all hopes or possibility of ever being blessed with the sight of them again?

We may therefore observe fourthly, That David immediately adds, "I shall "go to him, but he shall not return to "me." And this is one of those passages in the Old Testament, from which we may reasonably infer, that the holy men of old believed in another life after this, though a future state of rewards and punishments was no sanction of the Mosaic Law, nor clearly and expressly revealed in any of the writings of Moses. For David, by saying, "I shall go to him," must suppose that his child, though dead, did still subsist and live in his separate state, and that he himself should hereafter live with him in the same state. The very expression "I shall go to him," imports this, and cannot with any sort of propriety be construed to signify only that David should, at his appointed time, be mingled with the same dust, and sink into the same state

state of insensibility with his child: For this would be going to nothing, or the thing which is not. Besides, it could be no motive with David to give over his lamentations, that he himself should in like manner cease to exist, but rather the contrary: For, if we can only enjoy those whom we love, whilst we live together in this world, then certainly we have great reason to lament the loss of them by death, because then it is a hopeless and irreparable loss. Whereas, in the other sense of the words, it is a most clear and rational topic of consolation, which David here uses: Wherefore should I weep, and make the rest of my life miserable, for the want of my child, when I know that the time will soon come, when we shall live and meet again, never to be parted any more? If David then consoled himself with this consideration, how much more should we Christians do the same in like circumstances; since life and immortality are so much more clearly revealed to us, than they were to those, who lived under the Mosaic Dispensation? We are now as certain, as the word of God can

make us, that we shall live for ever. Jesus Christ himself is become the first fruits of them that slept, a proof and pledge of our own resurrection. Though therefore we may modestly hope that God, in consideration of the infirmity of our natures, will mercifully overlook the first transports of our grief, upon the death of those whom we tenderly loved, yet, after he has given us a sufficient time to recollect ourselves, he hath a right to expect, that we should patiently submit to his will, and comfort ourselves with the assurances he has given us, in his word, of eternal life and happiness. In a word; though we may sorrow for our deceased friends, yet we must not sorrow, "as men "without hope: For if we believe that "Jesus died and rose again, even so them "also, who sleep in Jesus, will God bring "with him."

5thly. It may farther be inferred from the words of David, "I shall go to him," that he was persuaded, not only that he should live in the next world with his child, but also, that he should see and know

know him again in that state; for otherwise he could not properly be said to go to him; since to go to any one certainly means in common acceptation, not barely to go where that person is, but to see and be conversant with him. And it is surely very natural for all of us to wish and hope, that we may once more meet with those whom we tenderly loved in this world, and for ever continue with them. And it cannot, I think, be doubted, that the knowing our friends, and seeing them in the same blessed state with ourselves, would give a higher relish to our own felicity; as, on the other hand, it would increase the misery of the damned to behold their companions in iniquity, and to be perpetually subject to the reproaches of those, whom they had drawn on to perdition, or any other way injured, in the present life.

There is likewise some intimation of this, in other parts of Scripture. Thus, in the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus, the several parties are represented by our Saviour as being known to each other

other in the next life. And in St. Luke it is said, that those who shall be excluded from heaven, and much more those who shall be admitted there, shall see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, and all the prophets in the kingdom of God. To which we may add that remarkable expression, so often used in the Old Testament, of Abraham and many others being "gathered to their fathers and to their "people:" An expression, from which we may, with the greatest fairness, argue in the same manner, as from the words of David now under consideration, that we shall know, and share in the felicity of our friends in a future life.

But then, it will be said perhaps, what will be the case, if the friends we loved should be in the unhappy number of the condemned, and we should know them to be so, from their absence from the mansions of the blessed? Would not our knowledge of their misery be some diminution of our own happiness? Could we bear the thought of their hopeless condition, without feeling, now and then, some painful

painful emotions of pity and grief? Would not, for example, the idea of a favourite child sentenced to dwell with everlasting burnings, fill us with horror, and throw a gloom over that fulness of joy, which we are taught to expect hereafter?

Certainly, according to our present feelings and imperfect modes of reasoning, this must be the case. But, to be grieved at what cannot be helped or remedied, and to make ourselves miserable, because others, by their own fault, have made themselves irrecoverably so, is certainly a weakness, and a proof of our present imperfection, and therefore will never be found in the spirits of just men made perfect, who will be delivered from all the infirmities and irregular passions, to which they were subject in the present world.

Besides, one part of our future happiness will consist in our being made like unto God; that is, in resembling him chiefly in the rectitude of our wills, and the perfection of our understandings.

Now, though God has the most tender love for all his creatures, and would not that any should perish, yet it is no matter of affliction to him, nor any diminution of his happiness, to see them deprived of the mercy they have rejected, and suffering that vengeance, which they so boldly defied. And therefore, whatever our present ideas may suggest, we may rest assured, that neither will the eternal damnation of those, who were once dear unto us, be able either to lessen or interrupt our future felicity. We shall be thoroughly convinced of the justice of the sentence passed upon them, and be continually applauding, and enjoying the rewards of, our own wisdom and better choice.

But, after all, it must be confessed, that this point is no fundamental article of our faith, and that though it may, from the grounds before us, appear highly probable, yet it is by no means absolutely certain. That God who made us what we are, and who knows whereof we are made, and what will contribute to our happi-

happiness or misery in the next world, will either grant or deny us this mutual knowledge hereafter, according as it would be conducive, or otherwise, to the fulness of our joy in that state. And, in the mean time, we may, with a becoming submission to his will, and an absolute confidence in his goodness, innocently indulge ourselves in a hope so natural and delightful; more especially, as it tends to produce the most salutary influence on our lives and conversations here.

For, in the first place, if we are thus to go to and know our friends in the other world, it certainly much concerns us, how we behave to them in this: since, accordingly as we shall have performed, or violated our duty to them, we may expect their everlasting thanks or reproaches. A consideration, which we should take along with us in all our intercourses with others; as it would dispose us to practise towards them that justice and sincerity, that love and charity, which our several relations require from us. We should not then look upon any man as a stranger

to us, whom we accidentally meet with in our passage through the world, and accordingly treat him as such, but rather as a fellow citizen of heaven, as a brother, who is to abide with us for ever in our Father's house.

Lastly, we may learn from hence, what important advantage a virtuous friendship has over a vicious one; and how far superior the hope of a true believer is to that of the infidel. For the friendship, which is founded in virtue, will for ever subsist and flourish: But the friendship betwixt those, who have been partners and confederates in iniquity, will certainly be turned into mutual curses and reproaches, and become an eternal and implacable enmity. And, whilst the infidel can only hope to enjoy his dearest friend, during this short and transitory life, after which, according to his own creed, they are both of them to perish like beasts, the Christian looks upon his friend as his fellow-traveller through eternity, and an everlasting possession. For he is persuaded, that though death may

separate them for a time, it will soon bring them together again, never to be parted any more.

Wherefore then should we weep so much for the death of those we love? Do we not know that we shall go to them? And is not that infinitely better than that they should return to us? For by returning to us, they would only return to misery, anguish and disappointment: but by going to them, we shall go to peace, rest, and joy for evermore. Even so, Lord Jesus! therefore come quickly!

SERMON LXXVIII.

Acts xvi. 30.

What must I do to be saved?

THIS question was proposed to St. Paul and his fellow-prisoner by the keeper of the jail at Philippi, whilst he was under an alarm from a terrible earthquake, which shook the foundations of the prison, threw open the doors, and loosed every prisoner from his bands. And it is a question, surely, the most important we can ask, and which, above all others, every man should wish to have satisfactorily answered, who thinks that he has a soul to be saved; who believes that there is a Heaven of eternal happiness, or a Hell of never-ending torments.

I shall therefore, with all possible plainness and perspicuity of language (for I wish, on a point of so much importance, to be intelligible to all capacities) endeavour to shew, 1st, What is implied in the question;

And 2dly, To give a full and satisfactory answer to it.

Now in this question is clearly implied, in the first place, that salvation is attainable by all men. It is indeed an opinion maintained by some, that God Almighty did, from all eternity, resolve and determine, by an unchangeable decree, to bestow eternal life upon one particular part of the whole race of mankind, and to inflict eternal damnation upon all the rest; and this without any regard to the works, the desires, and endeavours, of either one part or the other; so that let a man do what he will, or can do, he that is predestinated to damnation, cannot be saved; and he that is predestinated to salvation, cannot be damned. But this is a doctrine contrary both to our natural notions of God,

God, and the express declarations of Scripture, as well as entirely destructive of all religion. For our reason must inform us, that as God is a Being infinitely wise and just, as well as infinitely good and merciful, he must be absolutely free from all those partial affections and arbitrary preferences, which are so common amongst frail mortals. He cannot therefore bestow the greatest of his favours, or inflict his severest vengeance, without any regard to the merits and qualifications of those, who are the objects of them. Far be it from the Judge of all the earth to do after this manner! Far be it from the Almighty to be such a respecter of persons! Nay, he hath expressly declared in his holy word, and most solemnly protested, that "he hath no pleasure in the "death of the wicked, but rather that he "should turn and live;" "that he is not "willing that any should perish, but would "have all men to be saved." Which would be strange declarations indeed, if he had, from all eternity, precluded the far greater part of mankind from all possibility of salvation. In this case, all the expos-

expostulations with sinners, all the invitations to repentance, all the exhortations to piety and holiness, which are addressed to all men without distinction, would be only so many insulting taunts and cruel mockings to those, who were from the beginning excluded from all the means of grace, and the hopes of glory. And where, again, would be the end or use of God's appointing a day in which he will judge the world, if every man's doom was unchangeably fixed and decreed from the foundation of the world?

This doctrine is, moreover, subversive of all piety and religion. For, supposing it to be true, would it not be natural for every man thus to reason with himself: "My sentence is already past; and if "I am in the number of God's favourites, "the elect, my salvation is secure, without my concerning myself about it; "but, if I am set down in the black list "of the reprobates, the accursed of their "Maker, my damnation is unavoidable, "and all that I can do will signify no- "thing towards preventing it." And thus, accord-

according to the strength or weakness of mens' imaginations, according as they happen to be of a warm and lively, or of a cold and melancholy complexion, they would either fall under a fatal presumption, or sink under the blackest despair: the one, by too rashly presuming, that they cannot fail of their salvation; the other, by as rashly concluding, that it is impossible for them to attain it. But the true Scripture doctrine in this point stands clear of all objections, and is entirely worthy of the Divine Majesty. It tells us, that God from all eternity decreed, not that this or that particular person should necessarily be saved, or necessarily be damned, but that whoever complied with the terms of salvation offered by Christ, should be saved; and that whoever did not comply with them should be damned. That on those, who by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, and honour, and immortality, he will bestow eternal life; but on those who do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, he will inflict indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish.

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We may therefore rest assured of this, as an undoubted truth, that eternal salvation is attainable by all men, without distinction, by all who will comply with the reasonable terms on which it is offered to them; for otherwise God is not the Saviour of all men, and Christ is dead in vain.

"What must I do to be saved," is therefore a question which not only may, but must be asked by all, who have any regard for themselves and their greatest interest; in comparison with which, all other views and schemes are mere trifles, and very nothings.

2dly, Let us enquire, how a full and satisfactory answer to the question here proposed may be obtained by every man living.

Now, if you apply yourself to one sort of Christians, they will bid you abjure your present faith, and become, what they call, a good Catholic: for there is no salvation, say they, out of the Church of Rome.

Rome. Be you, therefore, ever so sincere in your profession, be you possessed of every virtue under Heaven, yet, if you continue in your heresy (for so call they the way, after which we worship the God of our fathers), without doubt you will perish everlastingly. Amazing rashness and intolerable uncharitableness in that Church, in thus pronouncing the sentence of damnation, not only upon all Christians now in the world besides themselves, but upon all the primitive Church, and upon their own Church also, for the best part of a thousand years! With how much greater reason might we, Protestants, retort this charge upon the Papists for their gross idolatries, and their many principles and practises, so directly contrary to the express words of Scripture! This uncharitable spirit in the church of Rome is certainly one of the strongest prejudices against it, if not a clear proof of its being a corrupt and Antichristian Church. Indeed, I know not what most to admire, the confidence—I had almost said, the impudence—of those, who can maintain such an assertion; or the weakness of those,

those, who can be moved by it. And yet this is as confidently and universally maintained by that Church, as if it had been said in Scripture, there is none other name given under Heaven, by which we can be saved, but only the name of the Pope of Rome.

Leaving then this Popish delusion, I shall proceed to state, what is the proper answer to the question in my text.

Now this will best be done by shewing, 1st, What are the best means we can make use of to secure our salvation. And, 2dly, What are the genuine signs and marks, by which we may judge whether we are in a state of salvation, or not. For, when a man is both informed how he may be saved, and how he may know and be assured that he is actually in a state of salvation, he has then a full and satisfactory answer to the important enquiry before us.

As to the means necessary to the obtaining salvation, they are all comprehended

hended in the answer given by the Apostle to the terrified jailer:—"Believe in the "Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved." Be but a sincere Christian; have that faith in Christ, together with that holiness of life and manners, which the gospel requires of thee, and then thou canst not fail of salvation. For, when the Apostle says, "Believe in Christ," we are not to confine the expression to faith alone. Every one, who is the least acquainted with Scripture-language, knows, that it is usual to express the whole of our duty by some leading and principal branch of it. Thus, as faith is here said to be the means of salvation, so is obedience to the laws of God, in the answer which our Lord gives to the young man's question in Matthew,—"Good Master, what good "thing must I do, that I may have "eternal life? And he said unto him, If "thou wilt enter into life, keep the com-"mandments." The truth is, that neither of these two will of itself be able to save us. Since, as without faith it is impossible to please God, so, without holiness, no man shall see the Lord. And, as the body

body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also. What therefore God hath thus joined together, let not man put asunder.

But to discuss this point more particularly. To believe on the Lord Jesus, is to believe him to be the eternal and only-begotten Son of the Father, our God, and our Lord. That it is for his sake, and by his merits, that we obtain the remission of our sins, and the assurance of everlasting life and happiness. In short, to believe in the Lord Jesus, is to believe all the articles of the Christian faith, as they are contained in the Holy Scriptures; and by believing them is not meant the barely giving our assent to the truth of them, as we do to other truths of little or no importance, but the firmly embracing them with a devout and active faith. We must be thoroughly possessed with an awful sense both of the truth and importance of them; so as to have our wills and affections, our desires and inclinations, our hearts, and minds, and souls penetrated, subdued, and directed by them.

them. Such is the nature of that faith of which the Scripture speaks, when it says, "That we are justified by faith;" that "the just shall live by faith;" "that "it makes us the children of God," &c.—namely, that it is a faith, which produces all good works.

With regard to the other great branch of our duty, the keeping the commandments, we must never forget, that the obedience required of us is a steady and universal one, without any exception or reserve. We must not therefore pretend to select out of God's laws, which we will keep, and which we will break; or think to commute, or compound, with our Maker for the breach of one law, by our punctual observance of all the rest; since we must know, that he who offendeth in one point is guilty of all. He that continueth in the practice of one wilful and presumptuous sin, is as liable to eternal damnation, though not to the same degree of punishment, as he that transgresseth the whole law. If therefore we would enter into life, we must have an

equal respect to all God's commandments, not allowing ourselves in the practice of any known sin, but heartily repenting of, and thoroughly forsaking, all wicked courses, and daily proceeding in all virtue and godliness of living. In a word:—the whole business of securing our salvation is comprized under these two short rules: that we sincerely endeavour to get the best knowledge we can of our duty; and then be firmly resolved to live and act accordingly. If we observe the first rule, we must attend diligently to all the means of instruction, which our several abilities and circumstances in life afford us; such as a constant and careful study of the Holy Scriptures; frequent meditations upon our spiritual concerns, daily communing with our own hearts, constant attendance upon the public service of the Church, and all holy ordinances; and above all, we must constantly address ourselves in private prayer to God, that he would be pleased by his good Spirit to guide and keep us in the way which leadeth unto life. And by the proper use of these means, even the most

most illiterate may be sufficiently instructed in their whole duty, and made wise unto salvation.

As to the other rule, of acting in all cases according to the best of our knowledge, this is certainly the wisest and safest rule we can walk by; since this is all that we can do, and therefore all which a just and merciful God will require of us; who will no more condemn any man for not doing such things as he did not know to be his duty, than he will punish the blind for not seeing, or the lame for not walking: provided always, that a man's ignorance be unavoidable, and not owing to any fault or neglect of his own.

And now, having seen what are the best means we can use to attain salvation, Let us consider, in the next place, how we may assure ourselves, whether we are in a state of salvation or not. And this is a point of such consequence, that no man, (if I may use the expression) ought ever to close his eyes in sleep, before he is satisfied concerning it. For, since no man

can tell how soon, or how suddenly, he may be taken out of the world, he should before all things endeavour to attain a reasonable assurance, that such is the state and condition of his soul, that, if it should please God to call him hence the very next moment, he can depart in peace, and with a well-grounded hope of seeing the salvation of God. Happy, beyond all expression happy, is the man, who enjoys this assurance, and miserable indeed is the man, who wants it; and doubly so is he, who even does not know that he wants it!

How then is it, that this comfortable assurance is to be acquired? Not by any high conceits of our being the saints and chosen of God, of our being moved and directed by the immediate and miraculous operation of the Holy Spirit; since these, though the common boasts of enthusiasm, may be nothing but the flights and transports of an over-heated imagination; but by soberly attending to the plain words of Scripture: "He that doth righteousness "is of God," and he that committeth sin

is of the devil: And hereby know we, that we are of and in God, if we keep his commandments: The tree is known by its fruits, and he that abideth in Christ bringeth forth much fruit. The plain meaning of all which is, that if any man would be satisfied, whether he is in the love and favour of God, and consequently in a state of salvation, he has nothing more to do than coolly and impartially to examine the whole tenor of his life and conversation, and to see, whether it be such as becomes the Gospel of Christ. Has he fairly and honestly applied himself to the use of all those means, which I have just mentioned? Has he sincerely endeavoured both to know, and to practise, God's will? Doth he believe in the Lord Jesus with all his heart, and that there is no other name given unto man, by which he can be saved? Hath he no favourite lusts, no beloved vices, which he refuses to part with? Hath he thoroughly repented of, and entirely forsaken, all the gross and wilful transgressions he has formerly been guilty of, not living in a continual round of sinning and repenting,

penting, and has nothing to answer for but the frailties and infirmities, to which the best of men will be liable on this side the grave? Such a one is ready, on the shortest warning, to meet his Lord and Master, and to deliver up his accounts with joy. But, if a man, upon such a careful and impartial review of his life and conversation, finds himself deficient in any of the above-mentioned particulars, he may be quite sure, that he is not in the way which leadeth unto life, and therefore should endeavour to get into it as fast as he can.

If it should still be asked, How can a man be sure, that he has not deceived himself in this inquiry, by taking himself to be a better man than he really is; I answer, by having no intention nor desire to be deceived, by dealing honestly with himself, by giving his conscience fair play and an impartial hearing; which, if it is not strangely misinformed or very grossly corrupted, will tell him the naked truth, will lay before him a clear and exact state of the account betwixt God and his

his soul, and what he has to trust to in the great business of his salvation.

I have now gone through the several points I proposed to consider, which must be owned to be the most interesting and important that can employ the mind of man. And that they are so seldom, or at least to so little purpose, the subjects of our thoughts, is a foul reproach to our reason and common sense. It has therefore been the design of this discourse to alarm and awaken your consciences, to convince and assure your understandings of the most alarming, and yet the plainest, truth in nature, the absolute necessity of your immediately and in good earnest applying yourselves to the making your calling and election sure, and of working out your salvation with fear and trembling. Rouse yourselves therefore to the consideration of these great and awful subjects, before it be too late. The hour is fast approaching, in which you will think them awful subjects indeed! Cry out with the earnestness and honest anxiety of the poor jailer in my text, "What shall

"I do to be saved?" And may the grace of God enable you to obtain a full and satisfactory answer to the question, and thereby fill your souls with peace and joy unspeakable!

SER-

CONCIO AD CLERUM,

HABITA IN TEMPLO BEATÆ MARIÆ, CANTABRIGIÆ, ANNO MDCCLXXXI.

IN EVANG. SECUNDUM DIV. LUCAM, CAP. II. COMM. 14. SIC SCRIPTUM EST.

Ἐπὶ γῆς εἰρήνη.

In terra pax.

" VERISSIMÈ scriptum est in Epi-
" stola ad Hebræos, (ut pridem ob-
" servavit doctissimus Scultetus *,) ange-
" los esse πνεύματα λειτουργικὰ: horum enim
" ministerio semper usus est Deus, cùm
" in vetere tum in novo Testamento, quo-
" ties singulare et stupendum aliquid ho-
" minibus fuit annunciandum." Et quid profectò magis singulare aut stupendum excogitari potest, quàm præclara illa me-

* Vid. Critic. Sacr.

lioris

lioris ævi auspicia, quæ celestis militiæ multitudo humano generi spondere non dedignata est: "Δόξα ἐν ὑψίστοις θεῷ· καὶ "ἐπὶ γῆς εἰρήνη." "Gloria in altissimis "Deo, et in terra pax:" Ignei utique amoris in Deum, et summi in homines affectûs plenissima oratio, nec ab illustri illa Esaiæ prophetia abludens, in qua regem olim adventurum clarè et apertè præsignificat, qui pacem toti terrarum orbi restitueret, hostile odium et inimicitias componeret, et arma, in bellum parata, in aratra et ligones converteret. Sed eheu! dum nosmet ipsos hujusmodi divinæ benevolentiæ argumentis futurique Messiæ regni indiciis consolamur, haud interea dissimulandum, (fateri autem pudet doletque) has cœlestis militiæ et prophetarum prædictiones, nondum perfectè completas, fatalem Judæis, necnon hodiernis Evangelii oppugnatoribus, occasionem præbuisse illa omnia rejiciendi argumenta, quæ Christi adventum, et religionem ab eo institutam, nobis luculenter satis confirmare videntur. Nostram enim de Messia fidem clamore et ludibrio prosequuntur, quasi in primo limine cadentem;

tem; magnifica scilicet et eximia de futuro mundi pacifico statu prædicentem, dum reverâ nil, nisi bella et armorum strepitus, per totum Christianum orbem oculis et auribus hominum se offert. Sic enim argumenta sua instituunt: " Con-
" sulas sacros Codices de Christi regno
" hariolantes, et tempora verè aurea pol-
" licentur; illa nimirum, quæ placidè et
" nullo turbine commota fluerent, talem-
" que pacati orbis statum, qualem, nas-
" cente Pollioni puero, Virgilius, ille poe-
" tarum princeps, divino carmine celebra-
" vit: At vero mores hominum veramque
" mundi effigiem contempleris, et immane
" quantum discrepat præsens rerum ordo
" ab isto, quem prædixerunt scriptores
" θεόπνευστοι sub auspiciis Christi oriturum:
" Aut vana igitur et falsa pronunciave-
" runt, aut nondum ille pacis Princeps,
" de quo tam magnifica loquuntur, ad-
" ventu suo beavit orbem." Nostrum sit, venerandi patres fratresque reverendi, has Judæorum calumnias refellere, ut sacris codicibus suus stet honos, nostræ verò religioni stabilis et fixa maneat confirmatio.

Hoc

Hoc consiliō, quid sibi disertè velint illa de futuro Messiæ regno jamjam allata, primo exquiramus; ex quibus abunde pateat, aliquâ ex parte huic cœlestis militiæ prædictioni respondisse primævum Christiani orbis statum; Aut, si novi hujusce mundi vestigia minus clara et conspicua appareant, Christi tamen religionem indole suâ et naturâ ad pacem in terra promovendam esse mirificè accommodatam, et quàmvis dissidia et tumultus alto silentio nondum compresserit, tandem aliquando Prophetiam suis numeris absolutam fore, cùm, ut ait Propheta Esaias, "non nocebunt in monte sancto, quia "repleta est terra scientiâ Domini."

Primo igitur notare liceat, scriptores θεόπνευστες, cùm in variis sacrorum Codicum locis, illa Evangelii tempora describant, quæ Messiæ regnum ornarent, et præstantissima pacis munera humano generi sponderent, non strictè nimis, et intra arctissimos interpretationis terminos, esse cohibendos.

Cùm

Cùm enim, poetico more, et cum solenni linguarum orientalium pompâ, novi hujusce regni splendorem celebrare suscipiant, et inter lupum et oves, inter leonem et vitulos, animalia sibi invicem maximè discrepantia, concordiam prænuntient, hoc tantùm intelligi certè velint, fore tempus, cum populi, immanitate barbari, naturâ feroces, nil nisi bella et dissidia spirantes, adveniente Christo, statim mitescerent, odia et iras deponerent, et amicitiam, quantùmvis indole et genio alieni, firmissimâ lege inter sese stabilirent. Haud enim illa, quam sibi quidam ex infimâ plebe Judæorum promiserunt, expectanda est naturæ permutatio, quæ bruta et pecudes molliret, quæ leones lupumve cum agno et hœdo conjungeret: Has talesque nugas, delirorum somnia, meritò rejicerunt è Judæis veritatis magis studiosi; vel luce clariùs perspicientes, non de bestiis illove genere animalium quæstionem instituisse Prophetas, sed de hominibus ratione præditis, quorum vita, mores, indolesque has miras insignesque vices subirent. At verò sistamus paululum, et anquiramus quid effecit ille pacis

Princeps

Princeps, aut quid profuit ista religio, quam, è cœlo ductam, humano generi commendavit.

Et quidem, si ad primordia mundi, Christiani scilicet, recurramus, et ex fonte ipso, non ex derivato flumine variis mixturis inquinato, de aquarum puritate dijudicemus, videre erit miram novæ hujusce disciplinæ virtutem, et fæliciter jacta temporum verè pacificorum fundamenta. Licet enim inter Judæos et Ethnicos fatalis quædam valeret discordia, mutuisque odiis et feritate alii in alios sævirent, non citiùs è cœlo descendit spiritus ille a Messia promissus, quam effrænata illa evanuit injuriarum libido, et varii animorum motus, in pacem requiemque compositi, siluerunt.

Inde nova illuxit rerum facies; videlicet, ἐπὶ γῆς εἰρήνη: non ad bellum manus accingunt, sed ad pacis munera fruenda læti conveniunt Christiani: "Unus enim "fuit omnium animus, una mens; nec "quisquam aliquid eorum quæ posside-"bat,

" bat, sibi proprium esse dicebat, sed " erant illis omnia communia."

Non solùm verò hæc de Apostolorum temporibus dicenda sunt: idem pacis amor eademque voluntatum consensio futura etiam sæcula ornabant. Non enim cum Christo et Apostolis in cœlum redierunt illa beatæ vitæ munera, sed quorum animos doctrina et disciplina Christi formavit, eos etiam benevolos pacisque studiosos effecit. Inde, benevolo esse animo mitique ingenio, certissimum semper fuit Christiani indicium, et tanti nominis quasi pignus indubitabile. " Videatis, quo ani- " mo, quo amore alii alios amplectantur," de Christianis ore uno celebratum est. Et si testes adhibeamus, certè in hac re non parvi æstimandos, Patres scilicet, quibus in illis temporibus feliciter vixisse contigit, unà consentientes audiemus, illos, qui nomina Christo dederunt, non, ut olim, mutuis decertare injuriis, sed amore erga se invicem universo affectos, varia vitæ officia libenter et ad communem omnium utilitatem præstare.

De hoc Justinum consulamus, Christianorum defensionem singulari quâdam constantiâ suscipientem: " Nos, qui pecuni-
" arum et possessionum quæstus præ re-
" bus omnibus dileximus, nunc etiam
" quæ habemus in commune conferimus;
" et cum indigentibus communicamus:
" qui odiis et cædibus mutuis decertavi-
" mus, et cum iis, qui tribules nostri non
" essent, communem focum non habui-
" mus, adveniente Christo, familiariter
" simul vivimus, et pro inimicis oramus,
" et qui nos iniquo prosequuntur odio,
" benevolentiâ flectere conamur."

Et, ne plura testimonia proferre necesse videatur, unum Lactantium audiamus: sic enim Christianæ legis celebrat præconia: " Quantùm valeant Dei præ-
" cepta in animis hominum, quotidiana
" experimenta demonstrant: Da mihi vi-
" rum, qui sit iracundus, maledicus, ef-
" frænatus: paucissimis Dei verbis, tam
" placidum quàm ovem reddam. Da
" crudelem et sanguinis appetentem: jam
" in veram clementiam ille furor muta-
" bitur:" Dei præcepta sic totum homi-

nem

nem immutant, et, exposito vetere, novum reddunt, ut non cognoscas eundem esse.

O tempora verè felicia, votis omnium exoptanda! quæ verò in hac vitâ frustra expectare liceat, nisi Christum toto animo induamus, hoc certum fixumque habentes, eos solùm divinæ illius doctrinæ fructus percepturos, qui legibus iisdem obedire, et ad eandem normam vitas dirigere diligenter studeant, et Christiani munus sedulò exequantur.

Nec mirum si tali guaderet felicitate Ecclesia Christiana, siquidém religionis nostræ natura, sive beati auctoris consilium, sive doctrinam, præcepta, morumque disciplinam spectes, ad pacem et concordiam stabiliendam apta et accommodata maximè videatur. È cœlo enim descendit, et inter homines vitam agere dignatur divinus ille pacis Princeps, ut violentos animorum impetus cohibeat, naturæ ferociam quotidianis litibus excitatam, et humanâ arte indomitam, leniorem reddat, et omni odio in exilium misso, clementiâ, amore, et variis benevolentiæ officiis ho-

mines devinciat, et devinctos teneat. Hoc fausto consilio in mundum advenienti Christo quid mirum si gratuletur angelorum chorus, humani generis felicitate ipse felix, et cœlesti harmoniâ attollat voces, resonans divinum illud beatæ vitæ augurium, "Gloria sit Deo in excelsis, et "in terrâ pax, erga homines benevolentia"? Nec tali auspicio indigna fuit nostri Redemptoris docendi, necnon vivendi, ratio. Consulas sacros religionis nostræ custodes; fontes scilicet veritatis puros et illibatos, et quæ officia sæpius, vel argumento graviore repetita reperiemus, quàm ea, quæ suâ virtute aut auxilio hominem homini conciliarent, et pace universâ totum genus humanum conjungerent? Hoc consilio, hæc et similia Christianis in mandatis dantur: "Pacem "cum omnibus consectamini:" "iis, qui "pacem commoveant, incumbite;" "quantum in vobis est, pacifici estote." Eò quo faciliùs ad pacem pateat via, Christiana religio suadet imperatque, "ut ne id "alii facias, quod tibi ipsi fieri nolis; ut "benignus sis comesque; ut æquo animo sortem, quæcunque sit, feras;" quæ omnia,

omnia, diligenter culta et omni studio observata, invidiam, divitiarum appetentiam, dominandi etiam libidinem, feraces illas odii, contentionum, bellique causas, sub imperio redigerent, vel funditus extirparent.

In eundem finem, ne ex amore sui, aut ex impetu iræ, perturbetur rerum facies, dissimulandæ sunt leves injuriæ, et, pro viribus, perferendæ graviores: et, ut verbo dicam, illæ animi affectiones nobis sunt excolendæ, quæ justitiam, amorem, et in miseros misericordiam fovent, hominumque naturam eâ lege moderantur et gubernant, ut nemini nocere, singulis vero prodesse, inimicis etiam ope et consilio succurrere, sese obstrictos ducant. Dei ipsius exemplo, communis omnium patris beneficii, qui solem suum oriri facit super bonos et malos, et pluit super justos et injustos.

Eodem consilio percurras novæ hujusce doctrinæ instituta primaria; Deum unum esse, communem omnium patrem, omnibus beneficum, omnium æternæ felici-

tati consulentem; unum inter Deum et homines esse Mediatorem, scilicet Jesum Christum, universi mundi Redemptorem, nec non futurum Judicem; unum etiam esse Spiritum Sanctum, Christianis, quocunque fuerint, præsidentem, et per omnia rerum ardua auxilio suo succurrentem; unam legem communem esse omnibus Judæis et Ethnicis, eandem esse expectationem, idem laboris præmium, eandem gloriam in omne ævum duraturam.

Hæc omnia societatem arctissimo amoris vinculo conjungere, et amicitiam inter Christianos eâ firmitate et constantiâ stabilire debent, ut ea, quam prædixit militiæ cœlestis multitudo, jure expectanda esset hominum concordia;

Quos verò instruxit doctrinâ, iis etiam exemplo præivit Christus. Dum enim in terris vixit, et singulare modestiâ hominibus sese adjunxit socium, adeòque pacis studiosus fuit, ut nec quenquam daret offensionem, nec iracundè a quovis acciperet; mitem placidumque omnibus se gessit, patriæ ritibus obedientem, leges

præscriptas

præscriptas observantem, et quamvis dignitate suâ divinâ omni humano imperio longè esset superior, tamen, ut conservaretur societatis ordo, civisque boni sese exemplum præberet, quicquid vectigalium exactores poscebant, miraculo etiam persolvere non recusabat.

Sufficiat hæc dixisse de religionis Christianæ naturâ, cujus præcepta ad pacem et concordiam promovendam vi suâ imprimis apta et idonea videntur. Et, doctissimo* Grotio judice, non insolito more loquemur, si Christum pacifica illa tempora, ἐιρηνην ἐπι γης, introduxisse affirmemus, cum ea omnia effecerit, quæ ad illum finem sunt necessaria.

Sin autem nec illa, qua ecclesia Christiana olim gaudebat, concordia, nec nostræ religionis pacifica indoles et natura huic cœlestis militiæ prophetiæ satis respondere videantur; quidni alios interpretes audiamus, qui has prædictiones ad ultima ecclesiæ tempora referendas esse censent;

* De Jure Belli et Pac. L. I. II. 8.

ea

ea scilicet, " cum," ut ait Propheta Esaias, " repleta erit terra scientiâ Domini, sicut " aquæ maris operientes?"

Quæ verba hoc proprie et clarè sonant: Tempus fore, cum religio Christiana per varia rerum discrimina, Dei auspiciis tandem elapsa, per totem orbem longè latèque diffusa esset; cùm Judæi, non ut olim, Messiam rejicerent, nec gentes in ecclesiam admitti detrectarent; eâdem verò fide, iisdem legibus consociati, sub uno eodemque rege vitas agerent, regni illius Messiæ participes in terris constituti, quod ab oriente ad occidentem, solis instar percurreret, et nullos nisi mundi limites agnosceret.

Sub hoc illustri imperio, Christi scilicet in omne mundanum imperium triumpho, redibit pax et justitia; non attollet gens una in alteram gladium, neque amplius discet bellum; ferociam deponent hostes sævissimi, et, si vires nocendi maneant, voluntas non manebit; exulabit enim quicquid iram movet, quicquid affectiones excitare solet, vel ipsis nimis molestas, vel

in alios injuriosas: mentibus omnium perfundetur cœlestis ille amor, vinculo quovis firmior, quem mors ipsa vix divellit, quem aquæ multæ, quem vel ipsius oceani fluctus non extinguunt.

In hoc novo regno, omnia humana imperia complexo, vigebunt leges et statuta Christi: mundi principes, isti terrarum leones lupique, tyrannidis amore prorsus subacto, eandem cum infimis subditorum disciplinam observare non recusabunt: sub eodem jugo facilè reducti lupus et agnus pascentur unà, pardus cum hœdo recubabit: et, ut verbo dicam, illo tempore, cùm e radice Jessis prognatus stabit in vexillum populorum, quo se gentes conferent, totius mundi requies erit gloriosa, Ephraim non invidebit Jehudæ, et Jehuda non oppugnabit Ephraïmum, sed inter omnes in unum coactos florebit pax, stabilis et fixa manebit concordia.

Si in hoc sensu prophetica hasce descriptiones liceat exponere, tempus adhuc futurum nobis est expectandum, cùm prophetiæ suis numeris absolutæ fuerint et perfectæ:

perfectas; tempus non solum prece quotidianâ ardentissimè exoptandum, ut Dei scilicet regnum adveniat citò, maximè verò nostro omni labore et studio dignum, ut indies magis majisque floreat Christi imperium, ut subditorum numero aucto et completo confirmetur, non eodem, quo humana imperia, fato periturum, nec iisdem terminis circumscriptum, in omne verò ævum, et per totum terrarum orbem, fixum immotumque duraturum.

Quid de futuro Christi regno variè hariolati sunt interpretes, vel inter se præfractè disceptaverunt, longum esset recensere. Non est nostrum, neque tempus sinit, vana opinionum commenta rimari, aut istiusmodi lites dirimere; nec quidem in argumento, in quo tractando difficile est non labi, nisi lentè et cautè est progrediendum. Quid porrò de novo cœlo et novis terris dixerunt sacri codices; quid de definito tempore futuræ illius in terris εἰρήνης, quid de millenio denique, illo beato et pacifico statu, certè, sed parum dilucidè, in sacris codicibus adumbrato, contendant alii. Nos expectat officium et munus

studiis

studiis nostris magis accommodatum, ut unicuique quid deceat ad regnum hoc stabiliendum paucissimis verbis dicamus.

Et si felicia illa tempora non sunt expectanda, donec vera Christi doctrina, grani sinapis instar, accrescat, ramos suos undequaque extendat, variasque gentes, immo totum genus humanum, sub umbra sua recipiat, omnia certè nobis sunt agenda, quæ ad Evangelium confirmandum, quæ etiam apud terras, nondum sole nostro beatas, ad divinum illud munus disseminandum maximè prosint. Vobis præsertim, reverendi fratres, pace vestrâ dicam, grave et omni studio dignum incumbit onus: vestrum enim est ex his literarum fontibus depromere quicquid religionem ornat, argumentis defendit, aut aliorum favori vestrâ auctoritate commendat. Et quidem vobis gratulari liceat, Academiam suas partes, ut olim, sic nuper, contra hostem fidei Christianæ, ingenio atque eruditione ad perniciem heu! nimis instructum, summâ cum laude persolvisse; et quamvis religio Christi lento quasi pede progrediatur, et terra non sit repleta cogni-

tione Domini, vobis tamen semper sit honori, studia et labores, pro vestro in religionem amore, fortiter et ex animo contulisse.

Illos etiam, quibus rerum sacrarum administratio alicubi sit commendata, quid a se in commune fidei nostri adjumentum et promulgationem fieri possit, sedulò perpendere oportet. Iis quidem officium mandatur ad pacem promovendam felicissimè constitutum; et si sibi et doctrinæ suæ caveant; si non solum id sibi curæ esse ducant, ut alios edoceant, res dubias planè et dilucidè explicent, errores dispellant, et eorum, qui sese opponunt, impetum certo et confirmato animo sustineant; verùm etiam hoc palmarium sibi vendicent, ut doctrinam moribus ornent, et quo debita religioni reverentia concilietur, ipsi se revereri discant, haud talis esset conquerendi locus novum hoc imperium tam lentò gradu procedere, sed videre erit et gloriari, favente Deo, ita auctum et diffusum, ut omnia, quæcumque sint mundi regna, fiant etiam regna Christi.

Sed

Sed quo facilius progrediatur hoc Dei consilium, et religio Christiana imperii sui fines extendat, viderint illi, quorum res in excelso positæ sunt, quàm sibi etiam de hac re elaborandum esse oporteat. Mira quidem est eorum exemplorum vis et auctoritas: dum enim virorum illustrium spectantur mores, illico formantur nostri. Caveant igitur, ut fortunæ splendorem virtutibus adæquent, ut exemplo aliis præeant, ut pacem promoveant, ut non solùm ipsi Christiano nomini sint decori et ornamento, sed hortatu, auctoritate, vitâ denique, præcepto omni longè superiori, aliorum mores in sui similitudinem effingant, et hac certâ explorataque viâ fidelium Christi subditorum numerum indies adaugeant.

Singuli denique, qui Christo nomina dederunt, vitas agere Christo dignas diligenter studeant. Hoc quidem omnibus competit: et si non cuivis ea datur facultas, quâ vel argutè religionem defendat, vel ornatè aliis commendet, vivere tamen, ut virum bonum decet, et verum

Christi

Christi discipulum, omnibus facile et in promtu est.

His conjunctis Christianorum viribus religioni restituetur auctoritas, et virtuti suus honos, Messiæ regnum stabilietur, et omnes gentes, quascunque fecisti, venient et adorabunt coram te, Domine. Tunc redibit ætas illa aurea, a poetis olim descripta, et a cœlesti militia prænuntiata, quam justitia pacisque munera ornare gestient: tunc ecclesiæ nostræ gratulari licebit, per varios fluctus et maris pericula tandem in portum receptæ: tum denique triumphum aget Rex ille cœlestis, omni potentiâ, omni imperio indutus, et, toto terrarum orbe armis suis subacto, in æternum dominabitur pacis Princeps, felicitatis humanæ auctor et restaurator, Jesus ille Christus; cui, cum Patre et Spiritu Sancto, sit laus, et gloria, et potestas, in sæcula sæculorum. Amen.

FINIS.

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